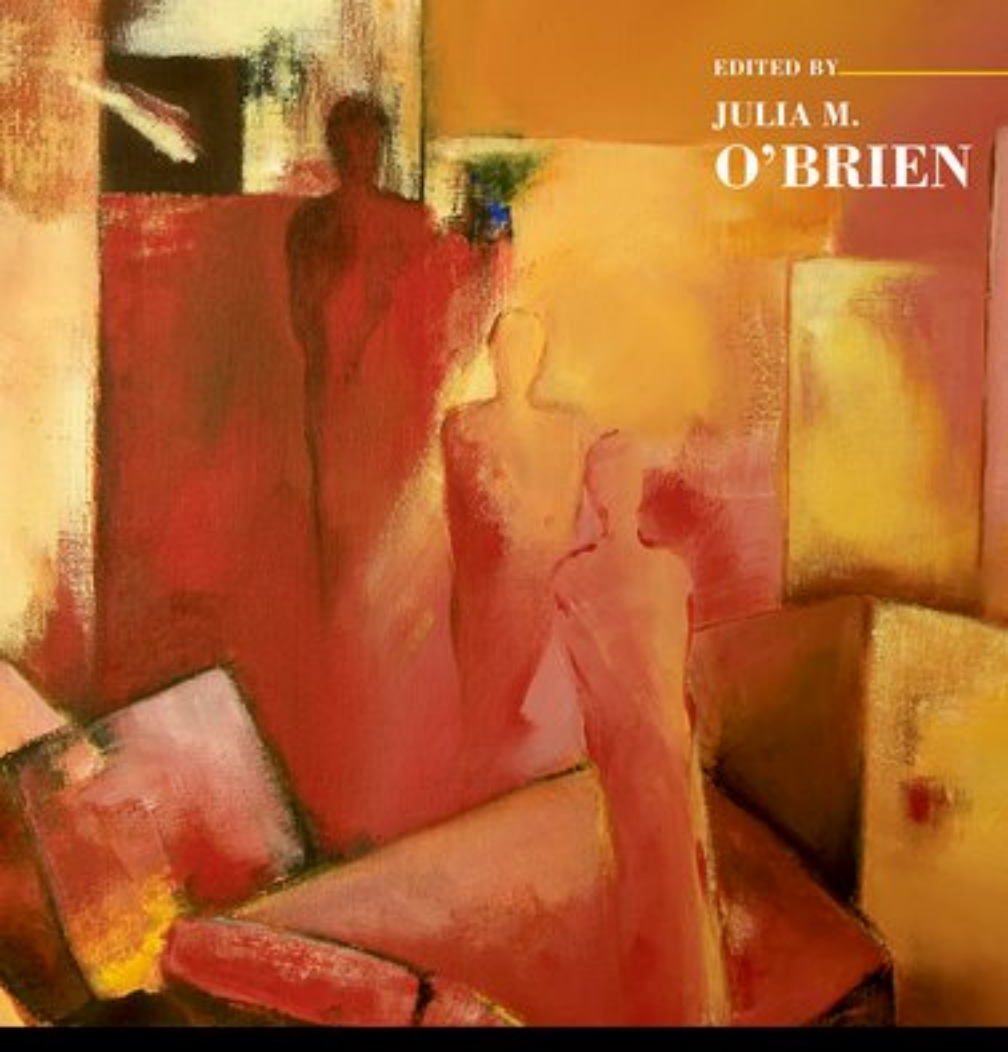

EDITED BY

JULIA M.
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The Oxford Handbook *of*
THE MINOR PROPHETS

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(p. ix) List of Abbreviations

Modern Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
ASV	American Standard Version
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American* Schools of Oriental Research
BBC	Blackwell Bible Commentaries

List of Abbreviations

BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BCT	*Bible & Critical Theory*
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BEThL/ BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHK	*Biblia Hebraica*. Edited by Rudolph Kittel. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905–1906
BHQ	*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*. Edited by Adrian Schenker et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004–
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudoph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches*
BibInt/BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
(p. x) BMW	Bible in the Modern World
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CC	Continental Commentaries

List of Abbreviations

CEB	Common English Bible
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
EB	*Etudes bibliques*
EBR	*Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Ed. Hans-Josef Klauck, et al. New York: DeGruyter. 2009–.\
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EDDS	*Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
ExAud	ex auditu
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCT	Gender, culture, theory
GNB	Good News Bible
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
HBT	Horizons in Biblical Theology

List of Abbreviations

HeBAI/ HBAI	Hebrew Bible/Ancient Israel
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HSAT	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testamentes
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IECOT	International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament
Int	*Interpretation ITC International Theological Commentary*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
(p. xi) *JETS*	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JHebS/JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JOTT	*Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSCE	*Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*
JSem	*Journal of Semitics*

List of Abbreviations

JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTS/ JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal for Theological Studies*
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KHAT	Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
KJV	King James Version
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LHBOTS	Library of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
MACO	Monografías sobre el Antiguo Cercano Oriente
MdB	Le Monde de la Bible
NABRE	New American Bible, Revised Edition
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NET	New English Translation

List of Abbreviations

NETS	*A New English Translation of the Septuagint.* Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDB	*New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* Edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
(p. xii) OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OEBB	*Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*. Edited by Michael D. Coogan; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Old Testament Message
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
PAM	Palestine Archaeological Museum
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
POT	Prediking van het Oude Testament

List of Abbreviations

PTM	Princeton Theological Monographs
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*
RevExp	*Review and expositor*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
RRBS	Recent Research in Biblical STudies
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTR	*The Reformed Theological Review*
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	State Archives of Assyria Bulletin
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments
SaNT	Studia Aarhusiana Neotestamentica
SB	Sources bibliques
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLAcBib	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SCJ	Stone-Campbell Journal

List of Abbreviations

SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SEÅ	Svensk exegetisk årsbok
SEJGBE	Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der jiidischen Gemeinde nach dem
babylonis-chen	Exil
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature
(p. xiii) ST-DJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SupJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SymS	Symposium Series
ThBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Edited by Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–
UBL	*Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*

List of Abbreviations

UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
UUÅ	Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup/VTS	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WW	*Word and World*
YJS	Yale Judaica Series
YOSR	Yale Oriental Series, Researches
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZBKAT	Zürcher Bibelkommentar Altes Testament
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZWT	*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*

Ancient Sources

CD	Damascus Document

D	Deuteronomic source of the Pentateuch; Deuteronomy
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text

Herodotus

Hist.	The Histories

Josephus

L	Leningrad Codex; Leningradensis
(p. xiv) L. A. E.	Life of Adam and Eve
Lives	Lives of the Prophets
MurXII	Muraba’at Manuscript of 12 Prophets
OG	Old Greek
P	Priestly source of the Pentateuch

Ag. Ap.	*Against Apion*
Ant.	*Antiquities of the Jews*
J.W.	*Jewish War*

Xenophon

Cyr.	*Cyropaedia*
Oec.	*Oeconomicus*

List of Abbreviations

Rabbinic Literature

Mishnah

m. mid.	*middot*
m. Taʿan.	*Ta’anit*

Babylonian Talmud

b. ʿAbod. Zar.	*Avodah Zarah*
b. Mak.	*Makkot*
b. Meg.	*Megillah*
b. Naz.	*Nazir*
b. Ned.	*Nedarim*
b. Nid.	*Niddah*
b. Pesaḥ.	*Pesahim*
b. Šabb.	*Shabbat*
b. Sanh.	*Sanhedrin*
b. Soṭah	*Sotah*
(p. xv) *b. Taʿan.*	*Ta’anit*
b. Zebaḥ.	*Zevahim*

Jerusalem Talmud

y. Hor.	*Horayot*

y. Mak.	*Makkot*

Tosefta

t. ʻEd.	*Eduyyot*
t. Taʻan.	*Taʼanit*

Midrash

Eccl. Rab.	*Ecclesiastes Rabbah*
Lam. Rab.	*Lamentations Rabbah*
Lev. Rab.	*Leviticus Rabbah*
Mek.Y	*Mekilta Rabbi Yishmael*
Num. Rab.	*Numbers Rabbah*
Pesiq. Rab. Kah.	*Pesiqta of Rab Kahana*
Pirqe R. El.	*Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*
Pirḳe R. ha-Ḳadosh	*Pirqe Rabbenu ha-Kadosh*

Other Abbreviations

ms./mss.	manuscript/manuscripts
OAN	Oracles against the Nations
XII	12 Minor Prophets

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(p. xix) Overview: Approaching the Minor Prophets

THE twelve short prophetic books that appear in the Jewish and Christian Bibles are, on one level, undeniably ancient. Emerging from the cultural context of the ancient Near East, they speak of ancient Israel's encounters with the long-vanished empires of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. In many ways, they share a worldview reflected in artifacts available to us from two archaeological sites in the ancient Near East: Mari, a city-state on the Euphrates River in what is now eastern Syria; and Nineveh, at one time the capital of the neo-Assyrian empire and now in Mosul, Iraq. In texts from all of these cultures, individuals are described as receiving communication from the gods/God, whom they believed were responsible for (almost) everything that happens. Audibly and/or through dreams and visions, ancient prophets are depicted as relaying the intentions of the gods/God to others.

While the documents from Mari and Nineveh come from the archives of only a few kings and were frozen in time, however, the biblical texts were preserved, edited, interpreted, and translated over many centuries. Once accepted as Scripture by diverse faith communities, they also have undergone centuries of interpretation and dissemination into wider, often secular, cultures. For this reason, study of the Bible is always a contemporary endeavor, as new readers bring new questions and perspectives to the task of interpretation.

In light of these realities, academic study of the Minor Prophets has experienced significant developments in the past twenty-five years. These developments include historical considerations, as new evidence and new perspectives shape new understandings of how, when, and by whom these books were created; literary concerns regarding the material's style and themes; and greater attention to the role of the reader in interpretation, both in the past and in the present. While contemporary scholars ask many of the same questions about the Minor Prophets as earlier readers, their work also reflects modern concerns with race, gender, empires, trauma, and the fate of the planet. Such considerations not only are reflected in the organization of this volume but also run throughout the essays,

demonstrating the ways in which interpretative approaches intertwine for real readers of the texts.

(p. xx) The Twelve Minor Prophets

Throughout this volume, the books under consideration are called the Minor Prophets. This designation originated with the Christian writer Augustine (*The City of God*, 18.25), who sought to distinguish these small books from the larger books of the Major Prophets, which for Augustine included Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. In Christian Bibles, the Minor Prophets appear at the end of the Old Testament and are considered individual books. In Jewish Bibles, the same material appears at the end of the section of the Tanakh known as the Latter Prophets, where they are counted as a single Book of the Twelve. The Book of the Twelve appears in Jewish Bibles alongside Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the book of Daniel belongs among the Writings (Ketuvim). Historically, the Twelve also have been known by the Latin term *Dodekapropheton* ("twelve prophets").

A key topic of discussion in recent study of the Minor Prophets is whether the Book of the Twelve is an ad hoc grouping of separate small books, joined on a single scroll for convenience, or whether ancient scribes intentionally edited and organized the twelve books to be read as a unified Book of the Twelve. James D. Nogalski's two-volume publication (1993a and 1993b) gave new impetus to treating the twelve Minor Prophets as an intentionally crafted unity. Nogalski painstakingly traced the stages of redaction (editing) that served to link discrete poems, oracles, acrostics, and other materials into a larger Book, one that traces prophetic activity from the Assyrian to the Persian periods. Since the 1990s, the unity of the Book of the Twelve has been widely debated, as reflected in the 2009 volume by Ehud Ben Zvi and Nogalski, yet more scholars now accept the unity of the Book of the Twelve than in 1990. Such approaches have been especially useful to those for whom the unity of the Twelve functions confessionally within the context of the unity of the Bible as a whole. For other readers, thematic approaches have invited comparison between books and critique of the ideology reflected both in the books and their interpreters.

This question of the unity of the Twelve is foregrounded in Anna Sieges's essay, but it also runs throughout the volume—through the analysis of biblical manuscripts, the history of interpretation, exploration of themes, and the discussion of individual books. Contributors were invited to keep open the question of the unity and variety of the Twelve; wherever they might position themselves in this discussion, they were asked to acknowledge the perspective of the "other side" of the unity debate. In the essays, we have attempted to be consistent with our language, using the terms "Minor Prophets" or "the Twelve" for a general description of this collection while reserving "the Book of the Twelve" for an intentionally unified collection.

This dialectic between unity and diversity is seen especially in essays that explore themes within the Twelve. As contributors engage concepts such as Temple and cult (Göran Eidevall), the nations (Daniel C. Timmer), the future (Mark J. Boda), and God (James D. Nogalski), they consider these themes within individual books and also the (p. xxi) larger Book

of the Twelve. The difference that reading twelve separate books for a single Book of the Twelve is also foregrounded in Daniel L. Smith-Christopher's essay on justice in the Minor Prophets, as well as in several of the essays devoted to individual books.

Prophets and (Persian-Period) Prophetic Books

Although the personalities of the prophets were a clear concern of some early Jewish and Christian interpretation, as Malka Z. Simkovich's essay demonstrates, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars such as Julius Wellhausen, Bernhard Duhm, and J. M. P. Smith placed ever greater emphasis on the individuality of the prophets. Attempting "to penetrate as deeply as possible into the personality of the composer himself" (Duhm quoted in Reventlow 2009, 329), they took on the historical task of placing each prophet within his own time period and retrieving the words authentic to the prophet from the imposition of later editors. Shaped by Protestant theological paradigms, they helped craft the image of the prophet into what Christopher Seitz calls the "morally charged prophetic individual" (Seitz 1996, 570), the advocate for individual spiritual religion over against ritual. This scholarship, as described in the essay by Marvin A. Sweeney, remains highly influential. The paradigm it helped shape flourished throughout the twentieth century not only in Liberal Christianity and Judaism, the Social gospel movement, and Liberation theology but also in evangelical circles. It continues to be reflected in textbooks that place the Minor Prophets in chronological as opposed to the canonical order (Seitz 1996, 569–570) and depict prophets not as foretellers but forthtellers (Kelle 2014, 78).

In recent interpretation, many scholars continue to employ redaction criticism, a methodology for identifying editorial activity, but their focus has shifted from the "original" words of historical prophets to the ways that editors addressed the concerns of their own eras through their representations of earlier prophets. Ehud Ben Zvi's essay describes it as a move from interest in "historical" prophets to prophetic books.

As in other areas of Hebrew Bible scholarship, the bulk of this editorial activity is usually dated to the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, after groups returning from exile in Babylon established a community ("Yehud") in Jerusalem under the control of the Persian empire. This "Persian turn" is described in the essay by Jason Radine, who notes that an increasing number of scholars interprets all prophetic books as scribal productions from the Persian period. This understanding of the role of scribes is reflected in the language of Robert Carroll, who considers the authors of the books "poets not prophets" (Carroll 1983), and it has run throughout the publication record of Ehud Ben Zvi (e.g., 1991, 2013), who characterizes scribes not as editors but "literati." Attention is paid to the Persian period throughout this volume, such as in Stuart A. Irvine's discussion of Hosea and Jeremiah Cataldo's exploration of postcolonial approaches to the Minor Prophets.

(p. xxii) Reading the twelve individual books as well as the unified Book of the Twelve as coherent pieces of literature rather than the accretion of successive editorial layers invites explicitly literary readings. In the past two decades, various explorations of themes across the Twelve have been published, including a thematic issue of the journal *Interpre-*

tation (Nogalski 2007). Themes, motifs, and genres become valued not simply as clues to the text's prehistory but for their rhetorical and ideological weight.

This literary sensibility is explored explicitly in the section of the volume devoted to literary considerations. The essays by Michael H. Floyd and Carol J. Dempsey explore the literary genres and stylistic devices of the prophetic books, moving beyond earlier understandings of prophetic "forms" and previous understandings of prophetic metaphors as simple literary ornament. As Dempsey underscores, literary devices such as metaphor are ultimately political: because they undergird human power structures, they must be critiqued for the sake of a twenty-first-century globalized world. The power and potential of metaphor are explored throughout the volume, including Nicolas R. Werse's essay that investigates the Twelve's use of violent metaphors for the divine.

Historical Contextualization

While scholarly interest in the biography of prophets has waned, other historically grounded pursuits continue to inform study of the Minor Prophets. Contemporary approaches endeavor to understand the cultural contexts of these books and how they resonate ideologically with other voices from the era.

Such a perspective can be seen in essays that explain the textual evidence for the Twelve. While W. Edward Glenny and Mika S. Pajunen provide rich information about the current state of manuscript evidence (from the Masoretic tradition, the ancient translations known as Versions, and the recently discovered Judean Desert manuscripts), they also explain the ways in which a particular manuscript tradition may have functioned within specific communities. These essays not only provide guidance for specialists with facilities in ancient languages but also give readers of English a deeper sense of why the Hebrew text of the Twelve is not necessarily the most ancient or even most accurate. Knowing *what words are in the text* is often as complex as understanding *what those words mean.*

In the past twenty-five years, interest has grown in the material conditions of ancient cultures—their economics, their food patterns, and the specifics of the empires that controlled them. For example, Matthew Coomber goes beyond simplistic understandings of prophets as preachers of justice to ask about land-holding patterns and Assyrian economic practices in the eighth-century setting of Amos and Micah (Coomber 2010). Materialist lenses are clearly evident in the present volume in essays on historical economics (Jason M. Silverman) and postcolonial approaches (Jeremiah W. Cataldo); both underscore the complexities of ancient economies and empires, as well as the power (p. xxiii) dynamics involved in the way that modern interpreters explain and appropriate the past.

Historically grounded analysis is explicitly employed for the sake of modern questions in Susanne Scholz's exploration of gender and sexuality and Stacy Davis's essay on race and intersectionality. Both essays underscore the difference between ancient and modern constructions of identity and call for scholars to acknowledge their own role in perpetuating systems of oppression. Similarly, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher critiques scholars who dilute the social critique articulated by prophets such as Micah and Amos and shows how

reading the twelve books versus a unified Book of the Twelve might affect our understandings of justice.

Texts Engaged with Texts

Both historical and literary approaches inform the essays that trace the intertextual connections between the twelve Minor Prophets and other sections of the Hebrew Bible. These authors ask diachronic questions about the direction of dependence among parallel texts (such as Isa 2//Mic 4 and Jer 49//Obad 1–8) but also synchronic questions about how the final forms of the materials now compare. Rannfrid I. Thelle investigates the Minor Prophets' relation to the Torah and Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and suggests that all of these collections were edited to support a common perspective. Steed Vernyl Davidson compares the Twelve to the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), asking whether anything other than size distinguishes the Twelve from the Three. After developing methodological criteria for identifying the influence of one text on another, John L. McLaughlin finds influence of the wisdom tradition on the books of Hosea, Jonah, and Habakkuk, as well as prophetic elements in the wisdom books of Proverbs and Job.

Readers

Due in part to the trend-setting work of John Sawyer (1996) and Richard Hays (1989), reception history of the Hebrew Bible now deeply engages scholars of the Bible. The thirty-volume series *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (de Gruyter), launched in 2009 and still in production, traces the way that diverse confessional communities and artists have engaged biblical texts in light of their own convictions. The Blackwell Commentary Series, also still in production, traces the Bible's influence in literature and the arts. To date, six of the Minor Prophets (Nahum through Malachi) have been considered (Coggins and Han 2011).

The history of the interpretation of the Twelve is foregrounded in various essays of this volume. Malka Z. Simkovich discusses early Jewish interpreters and their conviction (p. xxiv) that just as its warnings of punishments had come to pass, the comforting predictions preserved in the Minor Prophets would soon be fulfilled. Michael B. Shepherd examines the evidence from early Christianity (the New Testament and the church fathers) not only for the transmission of the Twelve (the Minor Prophets) as a single work but also for the reading of the Twelve as a unified composition. Unlike many handbooks that omit discussion of biblical influence on Islam, this volume includes Brannon Wheeler's discussion of the way in which the Quran and Muslim exegetes interpret prophetic characters from the Twelve as forerunners of Muhammed and Islam and Vanessa Lovelace's discussion of Islamic perspectives on Jonah. Marvin A. Sweeney continues the discussion of reception history by analyzing modern critical scholarship on the Minor Prophets.

Two essays model explicitly confessional readings. Stephen Lewis Fuchs, who has served as the rabbi of Reformed Jewish congregations for over forty years, attests to the importance of prophetic texts such as Micah in Jewish life. Kimberly R. Wagner, assistant pro-

fessor of homiletics, joins with Brady Alan Beard, a doctoral candidate in Hebrew Bible, in offering Habakkuk as a model of Christian preaching in the midst of community trauma. Confessional as well as secular uses of the Minor Prophets are the concern of John F. A. Sawyer, who surveys art history and music history to illustrate the artistic afterlives of the prophets, and Mark McEntire, who offers examples of the ways that the Twelve inform modern culture. The references in these essays, of course, soon will become dated, as new artistic forms and expressions emerge; our own period just as previous ones is only one moment in the interpretative history of prophetic books.

Concerns with sexuality and gender have taken on greater importance in recent studies of the prophetic literature. In the 1980s and 1990s, Second Wave feminist interpreters of the prophets insisted, repeatedly and convincingly, that prophetic texts are misogynistic (for a description of Second Wave Feminist approaches, see Scholz 2014). Throughout the Three and the Twelve, the nation and/or the city are called “whores,” the punishment for which is described in graphic language that can only be described as rape. Hosea was most directly targeted for this critique: according to Drorah Setel (Setel 1985), its “marriage metaphor” is so sexually explicit and voyeuristic that it can only be labeled as pornography, leading Athalya Brenner to coin the term “pornoprophetic” (Brenner 1995). Since the 1990s, feminist critique has found its way into the canons of scholarship on all biblical texts, as attested by the launch of the explicitly feminist Wisdom Bible Commentary series, edited by Barbara Reid; three volumes on the Minor Prophets have been published to date (O’Brien 2015; Davis 2015; Gafney 2017). Within the past decade with the further development of Gender Studies, additional attention has turned to constructions of masculinity and the heteronormative assumptions of texts and interpreters. Contemporary sensibilities regarding gender and sexuality are explained here in the essay by Susanne Scholz, and multiple essays consider the complications of gender in the Minor Prophets (see, for example, Carol J. Dempsey’s essay on metaphor, Steed Vernyl Davidson’s comparison of the Minor and Major Prophets, Bo H. Lim’s discussion of Nahum, and Vanessa Lovelace’s essay on Jonah).

(p. xxv) Reading the Twelve

In the final section of the volume, essays on individual books showcase the wide variety of ways in which modern interpreters read the Twelve. All contributors to this section were given the same instructions: to explore the structure of the prophetic book; its key themes; how it relates to other books of the Minor Prophets; and key contested issues in past and recent scholarship. The results, however, vary significantly, as the sensibilities of the contributor engage the distinctive nature of each book.

Historical considerations are central in several essays. In his treatment of Hosea, Stuart A. Irvine’s discussion considers the Persian-period production of the book and the prophet’s criticism of the Baal cult. John R. Barker discusses the differing interpretations of the poor socioeconomic circumstances the community faced at the time of Haggai as well as the book’s compositional history, particularly as it relates to the development of the “Book of the Twelve.” The history of the book’s composition also takes center stage in

Rainer Kessler's essay on Micah before he turns to modern questions such as trauma and gender.

Other essays focus more on literary considerations. After overviewing diachronic approaches to Habakkuk, Grace Ko focuses on a synchronic reading, examining literary devices in the book and then placing the book within the plot of the Book of the Twelve. Paul L. Redditt offers a thorough overview of Zechariah and its themes alongside his discussion of its compositional history. Cat Quine compares themes in Zephaniah with those in other Minor Prophets and reflects on how to make sense of the individuality of the book while recognizing the plurality of intertextual connections found within it.

Increasing scholarly interest in the history of interpretation can be seen in multiple essays. Aaron Schart considers the New Testament use of Malachi and offers theological reflections after his discussion of the textual history of Malachi (the Qumran manuscript 4QXIIa and the Septuagint). Anselm C. Hagedorn demonstrates how Joel's "vague specificity" precipitated its use and application over a broad period of time, and Vanessa Lovelace explores the "cultural survival" of Jonah (using the language of Sherwood 2000) in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, literature, and art. Bo H. Lim demonstrates the ways in which the changing demographics of readers of Nahum have dramatically shifted the foci of interpretation and attitudes toward the text.

Ethical and ideological concerns run through many essays, as contributors investigate gender and sexualized violence, pose questions about treatment of the Other, and call scholars to greater accountability for their world. In addition to exploring Obadiah's relationship with Jeremiah and the historical basis for its claims about the treachery of Edom, Bob Becking reflects on the ethical dimensions of the violent character of vengeance. J. Blake Couey explains historical critical approaches to Amos before calling for ideological critique of the book's claims about justice and pointing to the ways that the book resonates with contemporary concerns about environmental exploitation and the value of the nonhuman world.

(p. xxvi) ### The Design

The *Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets* is organized according to methodological approaches, with each section addressing a key question in the interpretation of the Twelve. The logic of its structure is as follows:

Part 1. Historical Considerations: *Who/What Are the Minor Prophets?*

Essays in this section of the handbook consider the Twelve prophetic books within their ancient contexts.

A. These essays explain the challenges of dating prophetic books and the current state of scholarly debate about whether the Minor Prophets constitute a single book or should be read as individual productions.
B. These essays explain the key manuscript evidence for the Minor Prophets, considering both evidence for the collection of a whole (including ordering) and also evi-

dence for individual books. Discussed are Hebrew manuscripts, ancient Versions such as the Septuagint, and Judean desert manuscripts, including those from Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls).

Part 2. Literary Considerations: *How Do the Minor Prophets "Speak"?*

Essays in this section take primarily synchronic approaches, reading the Twelve in their final form; however, they consider some diachronic dimensions of the commonalities between these books and others in the Jewish and Christian canons.

A. These essays offer contemporary assessments of the genres of prophetic literature and explore their use of metaphor.
B. These essays trace the assigned topic through the course of the Minor Prophets, both at the level of individual books and at the level of the Book of the Twelve. They offer not only a survey of the themes but also creative engagement with their implications.
C. Blending historical and literary considerations, these essays consider in what ways the Minor Prophets (individually and/or as a collection) are connected with other Hebrew Bible literature, in terms of composition, thematic connections, and shared social contexts.

(p. xxvii) **Part 3. Interpreting the Minor Prophets: *How Have Readers Engaged the Minor Prophets?***

In this section, essays consider the ways that real readers in particular times and places have interpreted the Twelve.

A. These essays focus on various historical communities of readers/interpreters, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as well as previous scholarship and artistic expressions.
B. These essays foreground newer forms of research currently shaping study of the Minor Prophets.
C. These essays often further insight into the perspectives of real-life interpreters, surveying some of the ways in which the Minor Prophets are understood today.

Part 4. The Books of the Minor Prophets: *What Are the Structure, Themes, and Contested Issues of Each Book?*

These essays explore the structure of each prophetic book; its key themes; how it relates to other books of the Minor Prophets; and key contested issues in past and recent scholarship.

This design of the volume is intentional. It begins with broad matters of discussion before focusing on individual books. Intended to reflect the current state of scholarship, it de-

votes more attention to the history of reception than earlier treatments and, as noted earlier, asks more about how real readers engage these texts.

As stressed throughout this overview, however, methods and perspectives are not clearly isolated into sections. Academic questions about redaction, unity versus diversity, historical context, and the history of interpretation run throughout most essays. Contemporary concerns are not limited to one section of the handbook but inform essays in other sections as well. Themes other than those targeted in the thematic essays appear frequently, including that of the ecological crisis facing our world.

For this reason, teachers, students, and researches are invited to read the essays in ways that best meet their interests and needs. Instructors may choose, for example, to assign the thematic essays after engaging the essays on individual books. Wherever the reader chooses to begin, the essays are intended to both stand alone and also inform one another.

From the Editor

In inviting contributors, I was attentive to diversity: of gender, ethnic identity, age, and geographical location, as well as ideological and confessional perspectives. Contributors include not only those with long records of publication on the Twelve but also emerging (p. xxviii) scholars and those whose specialties lie outside the Twelve. A key goal of the project was to also provide a platform for new and diverse voices.

One of the joys of editing is the opportunity to learn from bright and engaged authors. I have been surprised by the diversity of perspectives as well as themes that endure. Editing the volume has left me with a new appreciation of the key role that Jonah has played in the history of interpretation, and I am encouraged that multiple biblical scholars understand the importance of addressing the ecological crisis.

No less than scholars of the past, our perspectives on the prophets reflect our own ideological, theological, and philosophical assumptions and our assessment of what is going on in our world. Viewing ourselves as one stage of the history of interpretation calls us to reflect on what we do and why we do it. It is my hope that readers of this volume feel invited to join this wide-ranging and exciting conversation.

A Note to the Reader

These essays are full of biblical citations. Unfortunately, the chapter and verse divisions for some of the Minor Prophet are not the same in English and Hebrew printed Bibles. Because chapter and verse divisions were added long after the texts were composed, these Bibles reflect different decisions about delineating units. In this volume, we have cited biblical passages first by their numbering in English translations such as the NIV, KJV, and the NRSV (which is the basis for all the editions of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*). When the Hebrew numbering differs, we have included in brackets the reference as it appears in Bibles printed in Hebrew and English translations of the Jewish Bible

such as the JPS *Tanakh* translation (which is included in study Bibles as the *Jewish Study Bible*).

When not otherwise noted, translations of the biblical text are from the NRSV.

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From “Historical” Prophets to Prophetic Books

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay touches on the manifold ways in which sociocultural systemic features governed the construction of individual prophets in prophetic books and the ways in which these characters were remembered. It argues the case that the shift from “historical” prophets to prophetic figures in texts and memory in contemporary research calls also for stronger attention to be paid to sociocultural ecosystems and their substantial roles in the continuous production (through reading, and in the late Persian/early Hellenistic period, in addition by means of writing, composing, editing, etc.) and social “consumption” of the prophetic books and the prophets of memory that they served to evoke.

Keywords: Keywords: prophetic books, prophets of memory, sociocultural ecosystems, composition, readers, literati, historical prophets

(p. 5) HISTORICALLY oriented research on the prophets has undergone a significant shift in recent decades from a dominant (and at times, almost exclusive) focus on reconstructing historical prophets and their messages to their addressees to a focus on the prophetic books themselves and, recently, among some scholars on collections of prophetic books.[1]

All available information regarding the fifteen prophets (Isaiah–Malachi) comes from the relevant prophetic books and in a very few limited occasions closely related (and often parallel) texts in Kings and Chronicles. For this reason, “historical” portraits are by necessity grounded in the various textual instantiations (e.g., MT, LXX, some Qumran mss., etc.) of the prophetic material. Given these parameters, this shift to focus on the prophetic books themselves might appear as a long-delayed “normalization” of the field,[2] one precipitated by the sociocultural changes to the ecocultural system in which scholars participate[3] and its limits and balances.[4]

The present essay focuses on what the shift from prophets as persons to prophets as book(s) entails for present and future research paths. I will begin with some implications for matters that might be referred to as “literary,” though they are grounded on sociocultural systems, then continue to discuss additional implications that directly emphasize the

need for an approach not only informed by but also grounded on historical studies of the contingent ecosocial cultural system in which prophetic books have been read. This is followed by a section devoted to another sociocultural systemic feature playing a central role within communities of readers of these books, namely social memory. As a historian of the ancient world, I then show briefly how these general considerations may apply and open new research paths for an understanding of the prophetic books and the characters of memory that reading evoked among the literati of the late Persian–early Hellenistic period. References to these literati, however, are meant to serve as an example of the types of matters that become visible when the (p. 6) lenses of “prophetic books” (rather than “the historical prophet”) are used by historians of various periods, with their own readings of prophetic books and socially shared memories.

Methodological Implications of Focusing on Prophetic Books, Part 1: Literary “Conventions”

It may seem self-evident that the prophetic figures at the center of these books must be treated as literary characters, as is the case with all books and the figures populating them. The implications of this self-evident fact, however, are vast. For one, it means that these prophetic figures exist as part and parcel of a world of imagination portrayed in the book. The construction of worlds of shared imagination and thus shared memory (see later) requires socially shared sets of rules governing the production of these worlds and the characters who live in them. In other words, there is a generative grammar for the production (and consumption) of these literary worlds. Moreover, the world portrayed in a book does not exist except in interaction with other worlds of imagination portrayed in others. No book exists in a vacuum, and no character exists outside its interfaces with the world of memory and imagination portrayed in other texts.

As all other literary characters, the prophets must be characterized by a number of literary techniques used for these purposes, such as attributed speech (both in terms of content and diction), reported deeds, narrator’s notes and comments about the character, secondary characters that reveal much about the main one, and so on. It is methodologically important to pay attention to the genre of book.[5] Every literary genre carries conventions: sets of expectations about beginnings and ends, basic thematic elements, and about what tends to be conveyed implicitly or what tends to be explicitly and straightforwardly developed in a book.[6] Further, any study of a text that does not take into account its literary (including genre) features, whether its end goal is to arrive at historical considerations or not, is flawed from the outset.

Methodological Implications of Focusing on Prophetic Books, Part 2: Sociocultural Ecosystems

It may seem obvious to state that the character of the portrayed prophet in a prophetic book has never been an atemporal, ahistorical absolute but has always been deeply dependent on how the book was read by historical, contingent groups of readers. (p. 7) Readers engage prophetic books in ways strongly informed by their world of knowledge or encyclopedic knowledge (to use a term used by U. Eco) and by their related social mindscape, which in turn is associated with sociocultural environments and social locations. The shift to a focus on the fifteen prophetic books, therefore, requires each book to be understood as such and to be studied in a context far larger than itself.

Given that every book is part of a (mental) “library” that includes the other “texts” known to the group and that the meaning (as understood by historical readers) is influenced by and influences the meaning of all the other books in the “library,” it is impossible to reconstruct how texts were understood unless one has some way to reasonably reconstruct the mentioned “library" (see Ben Zvi 2019a, especially the introductory chapter). No historical study of a book, including a prophetic book, can be carried out by focusing *only* on the relevant book.[7]

All the mentioned “libraries” are socially shared and historically contingent. Reading is personal, but—like memory—is also social and predominantly social regarding matters that the in-group considers to be core. Historians interested in how books were read within a particular group are “library” historians. Since the prophetic figures are characters in the book as read by some group, the entire social and cultural ecosystem in which historically contingent readers read prophetic books bears a direct impact on the character of the prophetic figure that the group construes (and remembers) out of their readings of the prophetic books. Because this process is systemic, it cannot be book dependent. The way in which the fifteen individual prophets were characterized in the minds of the readers of these books was strongly informed by factors that apply to many or most of the fifteen prophetic figures in the collection. Some of these factors (including implied generative grammars for preferences and dispreferences for certain readings, messages, memories, emphases, and the like, all part and parcel of the general social mindscape of each reading community) shaped boundaries for how readers could or could not imagine the prophetic figures evoked by the books and around the entire world of imagination and memory in which these figures could and did exist.

As readers read books, they become types of authors because they construe the (implied) authors of these books. When it comes to the case of the prophetic books and the literati of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period, the case is more extreme because the latter not only read and reread the books but also authored, reauthored, edited, and reedited them. As they did so, and as they voiced the voices of the prophetic characters and indirectly of the (implied/construed) authors of the books, these literati blurred the lines be-

tween themselves and their characters and authors. This blurring of lines thus becomes a focal point for studies of prophetic books in all historical communities and certainly and most prominently among the mentioned literati. Their worlds of imagination (and memory) were not the same as their own historical worlds but were certainly not independent of them either. This relation between the two is another aspect that emerges strongly from the present methodological approach.

Further, whatever the “original” authors may or may not have attempted to do or communicate, texts—particularly those that a community considers “authoritative”—serve as tools for raising potential understandings and readings. This holds true for (p. 8) reading and rereading the prophetic books not only among the literati of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period but also in multiple periods and communities of readers. Biblical books served as a way to explore and shed light on significant questions in the mind of the community in a manageable way in all periods (see, e.g., Patristic readings, Qumranic Pesharim, Luther, Calvin, Abravanel, contemporary social justice readings of the prophetic books, etc.).

In this sense, the texts themselves became a relatively safe playground in which to explore these matters. Of course, groups set limits to these explorations, and participants (usually in ways unbeknownst to them) explore texts within the boundaries and preferences of the generative grammars for potential meanings at work within the group.

Prophets as Sites of Memory—Implications and Matters of Memorability

For most readers throughout history, the prophets were ultimately not important as simply characters portrayed in a book but as important sites of socially shared memory. Memories of the prophets served (and still serve in many groups) to socialize the in-group “properly,” to explore ideas, provide hope, and facilitate the ability of the group to socially reproduce.

To be able to do so, however, the remembered prophets must embody and communicate messages that are consistent with the main narratives, worldview, world of knowledge, and predominant generative grammars at work within the group. Since these groups are sociocultural and historically contingent, the memories of the prophets they hold are sociocultural and historically contingent. The Isaiah of Luther, for instance, must be different from the Isaiah of the literati of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period, the Isaiah of the late Second Temple and its aftermath, and the Isaiah of rabbinic traditions. Authors and readers project themselves onto the characters, who become in some way part of them.

Personages of memory cannot exist alone but only within an entire world of memory/imagination that is socially shared among members of the group. It is impossible to recall prophets without recalling their times, spaces and, other nonprophetic figures. There are

always limitations to socially successful imagination in any group; shaping an individual, memorable character is governed by implied rules for world construction and encyclopedic knowledge, while at the same time memorable characters are both integrated into the changing socially shared knowledge of the group.

Central characters of memory within a group, including prophetic characters, tend to embody and integrate into a single figure multiple positions that exist within the group. Moses, the prophet of old in ancient Israel who speaks differently both in terms of (p. 9) contents and diction in the D and P sections of the Pentateuch, is the most obvious case from the perspective of the literati of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period. Such integration enhances social cohesiveness in small groups that have little political power but also little perceived existential anxiety (see, e.g., Edelman and Ben Zvi, 2013; Ben Zvi 2019a).

If (as I have argued) the prophetic books are mainly meant to evoke and shape memories of the relevant prophets among their readers, then the prophetic characters that populate the book should be memorable figures. What makes a figure memorable depends, of course, on the sociocultural ecosystem of the remembering group but also on some cross-cultural trends often grounded in cognitive considerations (see Ben Zvi 2019a, and its bibliographical citations).

Today in North America many people name their children Isaiah, Jeremiah, or even Amos or Micah, but not “the redactor of the Book of the Four” or “the Deuteronomist” or “the group of literati who shaped the Prophetic Book Collection.” From a perspective informed by social memory studies, it is easy to understand why the attention of widely divergent groups across time and space was drawn more to memorable prophetic figures than to books as texts or their bookish authors. Well-individualized, great prophets of old were more memorable in ancient times than “bookish” anonymous scribes writing about things long past and they were more memorable than the books themselves (Sirach 48–49 praises prophets, not prophetic books).

Shifts and Consequences

As seen in the considerations outlined earlier, the shift from focusing on historical prophets to focusing on prophetic books invites attention to historical questions different than those about prophetic individuals. It favors approaches that contribute to our knowledge of the diverse sets of memories about each of the prophets. These sets of memories, on the one hand, are “vertically” linked memories of the same prophet among various groups over time and space, but on the other hand, they are “horizontally” linked to all other memories (and memory-evoking texts) within the same community. Nonetheless, it is never solely the memory of a single prophet that undergoes changes over history (or over social or cultural spaces that existed at the same time) but rather the general world of memory and imagination and the sociocultural ecosystem in which it emerges that undergo change. The memory of the relevant prophet also changes in turn.

The shift of focus toward the prophetic books and toward prophets as characters evoked as sites of socially shared memory orients historians toward the study of how various group of readers understood the character of a central prophetic personage. This study in turn cannot be addressed by focusing on one particular book or figure but must involve an entire sociocultural ecosystem. Such an ecosystem and its central social memory subsystem played an important role in shaping literary characterization and (p. 10) sites of memory, which in turn influenced the systems themselves. Multiple patterns of influence were constantly at work, both in the ancient past and in any other time and community.

Illustrative Cases

I here offer several illustrative cases of sociocultural features at work in the shaping of prophetic books and their main human characters among the literati of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period.

Between the Historical Literati and Their Prophets of Memory: Balancing Continuity and Discontinuity

One of the main social roles of the collection of fifteen Prophetic Books was to enable the community to think about and remember a sinful monarchic past with pious prophets at the center. The prophets provided a chain of continuity despite the discontinuity associated with the fall of the monarchic polity, the community’s concepts of Exile, and a restoration that was perceived as far from the eventual utopian future.

Within the present of the literati, at least in their mind, there were no equivalent prophets. While this might indicate a discontinuity with the past, the literati *and* the prophets whom the literati construed and remembered were understood as communicating the same authoritative knowledge. How did the literati manage similarities and differences between themselves and the counterparts that they created, between continuity and discontinuity, and between multiple separating boundaries and the areas of overlap?

On the surface, the distinction between the literati and the prophets is obvious. The prophetic books were associated with individual prophets and brought them to life/memory through reading. The literati, in their own conceptual world, were not strongly individualized and tended to “erase themselves” in their own writings and readings. The prophets were characters in a book, while the literati were authors, editors, readers, and speakers voicing the voice of YHWH and that of the prophetic characters. The literati lived in a world of a social/discursive preference for anonymity in authorship. In contrast to the literati, the memorable prophets of the past were not anonymous but heroic, memorable sites of memory for generations to come. Remaining anonymous allowed the literati to separate themselves from the prophets, place themselves in their “proper” positions, and advance important ideological and mnemonic claims about the incomparability of the great figures of the past.

Anonymous authorship also served to draw communal attention away from a focus on the reliability of the external author and toward an understanding in which the truth (p. 11) claim of the text is grounded on the way in which it embodies, communicates, and strengthens what the community considers to be true and vital for its existence.[8] Within this logic, it is obvious that the literati who wrote and read and thus shaped “the meaning” of the text had to be self-effacing.

As already mentioned, to make the prophetic figures memorable, the prophetic books had to strongly characterize them as individuals. Isaiah was not Jeremiah and neither one of them is Ezekiel, nor Amos nor Micah for that matter. If the truth claim of a text was not grounded on the reliability of the external character that voices it, then why were these prophetic characters so important? Why was there a need to voice and recall so much of Moses’ or Isaiah’s or Jeremiah’s character, if who the prophet was remained less important than “he” said/proclaimed?[9] The stress on the individual prophet as a site of memory at the very least connotes that the reliability and trustworthiness of the imagined and remembered godly prophet was also important: remembered is not only the *torah* of YHWH but also the *torah* of Moses.

Identity slippage is frequent in these books. The prophetic character, YHWH as characterized in the book, and the narratorial voice in a prophetic book so frequently share diction that the identity of a speaker can be ambiguous or multivalent (e.g., Mic 7:1–7). Moreover, the lines between the prophet, the imagined author, and literati reading the book are blurred. This social communicative process blends the authority of the old prophet with that of the literati who voiced it and even YHWH, who was imagined and remembered as speaking through the prophet voiced by the literati.

Despite all this blending, the prophetic characters were construed by the literati as very different from themselves. None of the prophetic figures was remembered as a “bookish” character reading, copying, editing, and composing multiple texts portraying multiple periods. Even Baruch in Jeremiah, who is not a prophet, appears as more of a monarchic period scribe who writes the words of a superior than as a temple-associated literati who writes and reads multiple books about a now distant past (cf. Jer 36; 45). When prophets were imagined writing (e.g., Jer 30:2; 2 Chr 26:32; and in reference to Moses, the prophet par excellence, Deut 31–32), they did not resemble the literati. The literati were not memorable, but the great prophets were.

Wearing comparative memory studies lenses makes clear another feature in which the literati and their prophets interact: the literati served as “memory agents” in their society for the great prophets of a heroic past. They could certainly identify with and appropriate the godly prophets they created and the YHWH that interacted with them, even if unconsciously, but they could not be the prophets. The characters of the heroic past by definition had to be incomparable. On the surface, this is a good example of the very common transculturally downward social memory plot.[10]

Significantly, the literati in some ways still imagined themselves as having superior knowledge over the prophets. The source for this imagination was grounded on the stressed individuality of each prophet. While each prophet had his own diction or set of dictions (e.g., Jeremiah), the literati had the ability to use all prophetic dictions; in this way, they were like YHWH, but only by editing, copying, and composing prophetic (p. 12) books and voicing their characters. When performing their professional tasks as literati, they could imagine themselves more like YHWH than the individual prophets.

Individualization and the need to remember the prophetic figures as separate characters also contributed much to a world of memory and imagination in which the prophets do not interact with one another, even if they were assumed to live in close temporal and spatial proximity. The literati, of course, “knew” them all; having a larger temporal perspective and a corpus of texts than the remembered prophets did, they could understand the true meaning of the words of the prophets even better than the prophets they imagined. Although inferior to the prophets as individuals, the literati had access to a system of knowledge that the former could not. This observation explains why/how the literati shaped the prophets and their words: for they could imagine making explicit the meaning of what the prophet stated in ways that the prophet himself could not have done in the past. They may have imagined themselves channeling what the prophet would have desired to say if given the chance to know what the literati claimed to know, since the prophets were imagined as stating claims to carry truth value to later generations of readers and of Israel in general.

Balancing Close Historical Anchoring and Deanchoring

Placing prophets at the center of their remembered world required anchoring them in time and space. But how narrowly should the literati anchor them and what was the cost of doing so? The subcollection of the Twelve Prophetic Books evoked memorable images of the sinful monarchic past, for the most part without resorting directly to “historical” narratives closely anchored in singular, narrowly defined circumstances. This lack of close anchoring reflected and communicated an understanding that those who are wise enough to understand godly speeches (paraphrasing Hos 14:10) do not have to know the circumstances in which the reported godly/prophetic speeches were uttered, either within the world of the book or within the related world of memory of the literati.

It is easy to understand why such a strong tendency was at work among the literati. Deanchoring the prophets from specific times and places served to shape and communicate a sense of cross-temporality to the godly speeches, which as sites of memory themselves could not be too tightly bound to past social circumstances. At the same time, the need to imagine and remember a monarchic past in which the central characters were prophets required the presence of some memories of them at the center of the polity and its “historical” events. In the world of the literati as a sociocultural ecosystem, these two tendencies not only balanced each other but also, more importantly, required each other. Because we have books such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, for example, we also can have books such as Hosea and Micah; even within a book, because we have some of Jeremiah’s words

set in narrowly defined circumstances, we also can have the less historically anchored Jer 30–31 (see Ben Zvi 2019b).

(p. 13) Consistency Based on Inconsistency and Coherence Grounded in Incoherence

In the world of the past conjured by the literati’s reading and rereading of the prophetic books, the prophetic figures often advance positions that are from a strictly logical viewpoint inconsistent (within the limits of the acceptable discourse) with positions they advance in the same book. While I have explored this aspect elsewhere, I note here that textual coherence within a book (and a collection of books) and character coherence (both from a literary and social memory perspective) were often grounded across literary genres on seeming incoherence and inconsistency (e.g., Joshua, Chronicles, Kings, the Pentateuch as a collection).[11] Seeming logical contradictions or tensions in the evoked images of the fifteen prophets (or sixteen, if one includes Moses, the archetype of all prophets) were the outcome of a well-attested generative grammar and a “taste” (along the lines of the thought of Bourdieu 1979), not textual “accidents” that historians should gloss over or explain away. For instance, the literati among whom the book of Hosea emerged in its present form remembered an Hosea who strongly supported the concept of a future ideal Davidic king (Hos 3:5) but who also voiced and embodied utopian futures in which a Davidide is not mentioned and indeed has no role to play (Hos 14:5–8; cf. 2:21–22; also compare the Isaiah of memory evoked by, e.g., Isa 11:1–10 with the one evoked by Isa 40–66). The “taste” for central characters who may embody in one person seemingly contradictory positions—within the limits set by the ideological discourse of the group—went together with an emphasis on social coherence and the acceptance of some level of fuzziness and multivocality. This is not surprising, given that the main personage in the memoryscape of the literati was YHWH, one who embodied multivocality. Taking into account the concept of *imitatio dei* (cf. Lev 19:2; Deut 10:12, 11:22, 26:17), it is only to be expected that the literati, their prophets of memory, and the (construed) authors of historical narratives would be imagined as sharing, to some extent and within “appropriate” limits, this feature.

Instead of a Conclusion

This essay has only touched on the manifold ways in which sociocultural systemic features governed the construction of individual prophets in prophetic books and the ways in which these characters were remembered. One may have added numerous and diverse constraints emerging from the world of imagination and memory of the literati (e.g., the characterization of sinful Israel and sinful leaders that went together with a justification for the calamity of the fall of Jerusalem and Exile); from common narrative ways of structuring memory (see, e.g., the pairs of Isaiah and Hezekiah vs. Jeremiah and Zedekiah and to some extent Jehoiakim); or from instances in which coherence grounded in incoherence was achieved at the level of the past recalled by various collections (p. 14) of books (e.g., the prophetic books and the Deuteronomistic History; in the case of Josiah). The dis-

cussion should suffice, however, to show that the shift from “historical” prophets to prophetic figures in texts and memory calls also for stronger attention to be paid to socio-cultural ecosystems and their substantial roles in the continuous production (through reading, and in the late Persian/early Hellenistic period, in addition by means of writing, composing, editing, etc.) and social “consumption” of these books and the prophets of memory that they served to evoke. This shift may well substantially impact research on the prophetic books and characters for the next decades.

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Notes:

(1.) On a good discussion of recent trends in prophetic literature, see Floyd (2015a, 2015b) and Boda, Floyd, and Toffelmire (2015). The bibliography on “The Twelve” is extensive; see, for example, the list of works prepared by Aaron Schart at https://www.zotero.org/groups/248047/twelveprophets/items/order/creator/sort/asc. See also the essays in Di Pede and Scaiola (2016). For debate on these matters, see Ben Zvi and Nogalski (2009); for a literary studies perspective, see Landy (2010).

(2.) The prophetic books included in the HB belong to a very different genre than the prophetic texts from other ancient Near Eastern societies. Moreover, unlike the case in the former, the primary focus in the latter tends to be on the texts themselves rather than on the individual figures of the mentioned prophets: for instance, more on the text of the prophecy for the Crown Prince Assurbanipal than on the prophetess Mullissu-kabtat (see, e.g., SAA 9, 007); more on the contents of the prophecy that Abiya, prophet of Adad, told Nur-Sîn (according to the report sent by the latter to Zimri-Lim) than on Abiya (see A 1968).

([3.]) See Nissinen (2013) and bibliography. Nissinen draws attention to various social constructions of prophecy (and thus prophets), each emerging within particular sociocultural contexts, beginning already in antiquity and including contemporary research.

([4.]) For instance, many scholars who pay much attention to prophetic books as such and the prophets that populated them as social, literary constructions focus much also on the question encapsulated in “From Prophets to Prophetic Books” (e.g., Edelman 2009; Nissinen 2013), while many redactional-critical scholars still try to reconstruct the first layer, which often they associate with the historical prophet.

([5.]) See Nissinen (2005, 155–156). For my own position on the genre of “prophetic book,” see Ben Zvi (2003, 2009). The shift in form-critical studies from a focus on the (oral) “oracle” and its genre/s to one on the written, prophetic book is particularly significant.

([6.]) For example, narrative plots may be implied at the macro-level of a prophetic book but are not explicitly and straightforwardly developed as in (cross-cultural) narratives. The metaprophetic book of Jonah is an exception, since it is also a narrative (see Ben Zvi 2003).

([7.]) This raises substantial questions about lineal temporal reconstructions of the evolving meaning of various diachronic layers of a single prophetic book that do not openly take into account the co-texts or mental library within which each (reconstructed) layer was read by the proposed historical redactors. No book is an island, but neither is a proposed layer of a book.

([8.]) Compare with Blum, who wrote, “The Hebrew Bible lacks…the notion of an author who can be distinguished from his own work…the reliability of the truth claim will be based on the text’s force in revealing essential aspects of the world of the readers, that is, on the significance of the texts for strengthening or defining the community, for providing guidance for its life etc.” (Blum 2007, 32).

([9.]) The gendered reference is intentional here and relates to social constructions of gender among the literati. To address these matters demands a separate essay. Although there is clear evidence that there were female prophets in ancient Judah/Yehud, the fifteen prophetic figures “immortalized” in the prophetic book collection were all male, and so was the prophet who communicated the “torah” (i.e., Moses).

([10.]) In some cases, in the utopian future the trend will turn upward, which at least in some versions eliminates the need of literati and prophets (see Jer 31:31–34; cf. Jer 32:38–41; Ezek 11:19–20; 36:25–28), but this matter requires a separate discussion.

([11.]) See Ben Zvi (2019a). The Moses of the Pentateuch, for example, was often remembered as stating seemingly contradictory matters and spoke with two dictions, namely D and P (according to the names given to the respective textual traditions), as Pentateuchal research has shown from generations, and so did YHWH when speaking to him. Moreover, see Josh 11:23 and 13:1–6 (and also Josh 23:1–5, 14; Judg 1:1–2:5). See also 2 Chr 14:2, 4 and contrast with 2 Chr 15:17; 2 Chr 17:6 and contrast with 2 Chr 20:33; 1 Kgs

5:27–32; 11:28 and contrast with 1 Kgs 9:20–22. See Mic 5:6, 7–8 in close textual proximity with Mic 4:1–5; 7:17. Examples can be easily multiplied, but those here suffice to make the point.

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The Dating of Prophetic Books and the Persian-Period “Turn”

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This article identifies the most useful approaches for determining the historical date of composition or redaction of a text from the Minor Prophets as being its historical references, social levels of literacy and linguistic development, the text’s theology, intertextual dependence, and participation in otherwise datable literary strata. This article examines the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Further, this article explores the “Persian turn” in somewhat recent scholarship in which Minor Prophets set in the pre-exilic period are instead dated to the Persian period (late sixth to late fourth centuries BCE). While acknowledging that Persian dating of previously thought older works has been productive, this article warns that taking this process to extremes can compress the lengthy histories of biblical prophetic books that probably do have pre-exilic origins into too short a time frame and too limited a cultural range.

Keywords: Keywords: dating, historical, composition, Minor Prophets, prophetic, pre-exilic, Persian period

> *Who taught those ancient writers their simplicity of language, their felicity of expression, their pathos, and above all, their faculty of sinking themselves entirely out of sight of the reader and making the narrative stand out alone and seem to tell itself? Shakespeare is always present when one reads his book; Macaulay is present when we follow the march of his stately sentences; but the Old Testament writers are hidden from view.*
>
> —Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), chap. 47

In this comment on the Joseph narrative in Genesis, Mark Twain was speaking of a narrative with no stated author (besides, traditionally, Moses). The prophetic books seem to present a different case, where an identifiable voice and personality of the named, historically situated prophet is apparent: Amos the stark champion of the oppressed; Hosea the estranged husband; Jeremiah the grieving, pained spokesman for a punishing God. The prophetic books, however, are eminently composite works, where the voice of any histori-

cal prophet speaks in concert (or cacophony) with the voices of others. It is a perennial question in the study of biblical prophetic literature as to whether the voice of the prophet or of individual redactors can be historically identified or to what extent their individual voices are "hidden from view."

The Minor Prophets would seem to give their historical-critical readers an advantage over the readers of the Major Prophets in that, while altogether the size of a Major Prophets book, the Book of the Twelve is clearly and openly a work of several distinctively named authors with different dates. The situation with the Twelve is not nearly so (p. 18) simple as it first appears, however, and each book has been divided in modern scholarship into various portions that are supposed to derive from different years. In this essay, I provide a general outline of methods and approaches to solving problems of dating portions of the Twelve, as well as a critical examination of the trend in recent scholarship to date increasing amounts of biblical material (here focusing on the Twelve) into the Persian period. The primary approaches to determining a book or passage's date are (1) historical references, (2) literacy, (3) linguistic development, (4) theology, (5) intertextual dependence, and (6) participation in otherwise datable literary strata.

Historical References

The primary way to determine a book or passage's date of origin is the presence of specific datable historical references contained therein. The superscriptions of most of the books of the Twelve set their own dates within regnal synchronisms for when both Israelite kingdoms still existed, or, after the fall of the northern kingdom, only the regnal years for the Judahite kings. Sometimes the superscriptions provide even narrower dating, such as "two years before the earthquake" in Amos 1:1, even if the calendar year of that event is lost to us. Most commentaries on the Minor Prophets (as well as of the Major Prophets) have taken these superscriptions seriously for at least the *Grundschrift* (earliest layer) of these books. Sometimes other material in the books will coincide with the superscription's date, such as the appearance of Jeroboam II in Amos 1:1 and 7:10–17. The superscriptions and supporting material in the books may, however, simply be part of establishing a setting for a book written at a later time, particularly in the case with *ex eventu* prophecies. Many prophetic books contain historical references that compel the historically critical reader to assign a different date for parts of a book than the book's superscription-set date, such as the appearance of the sixth-century emperor Cyrus in Isa 44:28 and 45:1 in a book ascribed to the eighth-century prophet Isaiah.

How to evaluate a historical datum in a prophetic book also depends on when one dates such a reference. The book of Amos serves as a good example, as this book contains an unusually large number of political and military historical references compared to the other books in the Twelve. Beyond items with a generally absolute date, such as the regnal synchronism of Jeroboam II and Uzziah in the superscription (Amos 1:1), the book names most of the nations in the area of Israel (including some specific personal names, such as Hazael and Ben-Hadad in Amos 1:4) along with supposed historical incidents in-

volving them. A particularly puzzling historical reference is the command to see what becomes of Calneh, Hamath, and Gath in Amos 6:2. Calneh and Hamath appear together in an Assyrian eponym list as having been conquered by Tiglath-Pileser III in 738 BCE, and they appear together in a similar victim sense in Isa 10:9 (Calneh there called "Calno"). The reference in Isaiah presents no chronological problem since the strata of Isaiah generally are not seen as beginning prior to the 730s BCE, but for Amos they do present a problem, as the fall of these cities to Assyria in the same year postdates the book of Amos's superscription dating range.

(p. 19) There are three major ways of handling this historical problem. (1) Those who hold to the superscription's dating for most or all of the book of Amos identify the historical references to earlier attacks on these cities by Assyrians and/or Arameans in the ninth century BCE (e.g., Paul 1991, 203–204 and Sweeney 2000, 243–244). (2) If one keeps at least some of the book within the superscription's dating but regards the mention of Calneh-Hamath as referring to 738 BCE, then this verse is separated off as the addition of a later hand (perhaps the supposed "disciples" of Amos) in the growth of the book (e.g., Wolff 1977, 274–275). (3) If one dates none of the strata of the book to the superscription's dating, then the verse can be kept intact within its literary context while also still referring to an event occurring in 738 BCE, which in the fictive 760s dating of the book could function as an *ex eventu* predictive prophecy of the prophetic character "Amos" (e.g., Radine 2010, 56–60 and Eidevall 2017, 173, 177–178). The reference to Gath has also been handled in these three ways by scholars, in even more complex ways.

The same three approaches can be observed in the ways that scholars have handled the historical references in the Oracles against the Nations (OAN) in Amos 1:3–2:16. Scholars who date all or most of the book within the superscription's dating will identify the references to events prior to that time (e.g., Paul 1991, 45–99); those who date some of the book to the date of its superscription but posit additional layers have ascribed some of the oracles to the prophet's time while dating others decades or centuries later (e.g., Wolff 1977, 112–113, 149–150). Scholars who disconnect the entire book from the superscription's dating have suggested other dates for Amos's Oracles against the Nations, such as an exilic setting (Radine 2010, 170–183, with the exception of the oracle against Israel).

As seen here, historical references in a biblical book provide little stable ground for dating. They can be wonderfully valuable anchors, allowing the modern reader to situate the book or a portion of it to a definite historical context; and yet they can be frustratingly vague, perhaps meaningful to the text's original audience or applicable to a variety of historical occurrences. Such references can refer to a recurring, stereotypical event rather than a single, specific one. At times, references can be not historical events but rather retellings of a legend or fictive compositions of the author, as might be the case with the Amaziah narrative (Amos 7:10–17), rendering dating impossible. Overall, the historical reliability of superscriptions is a matter of doubt, as is their applicability to any or all parts of a biblical text.

Literacy

A second major factor in the consideration of the date of a biblical text is the growth of literacy in Iron Age Israel, a culture which produced a large and complex literature even though literacy developed rather late. While it is clear that Jewish communities had substantial literacy (in at least among some strata of society) in the postexilic eras, the growth of literacy also is important for dating supposedly pre-exilic texts. Epigraphic evidence demonstrates sufficient literacy in the ninth–eighth centuries in areas such Aram/Moab for the composition of monumental inscriptions, while similar evidence (p. 20) does not appear in Palestine until a century or so later (Lemaire 2015; see also the multistage development of writing in the ninth century in Schmidt 2015b). Evidence for substantial literacy, at least at the epistolary level, definitively was established only in the last decades of the kingdom of Judah, as evidenced by letters at the Negev fortresses, such as Arad (Na'aman 2015). The Gezer Calendar demonstrates the presence of the Proto-Hebrew alphabet in the early Iron Age, but as Brian Schmidt has pointed out, the presence of an alphabet does not necessarily indicate the level of literary needed to produce a biblical book (Schmidt 2015a). At what point Israelites were capable of writing a biblical prophetic book remains in question. If they had no such capacity until the closing years of the monarchy or not until the exilic or postexilic periods, then books like Hosea, Amos, and Micah could not have been written in their superscriptions' dates. Literary composition can and does occur in oral-only or predominantly oral societies, however, as ethnographic studies have shown (Miller 2015), a society that is not yet literarily literate could still produce a literature in strictly oral form that was put down in writing centuries later. At the very least, the Siloam Tunnel Inscription and the Deir 'Alla Inscription (the latter not Israelite but within close proximity) and small written documents suggest that by the time the earliest "writing prophets" appear in the eighth century BCE, Israel/Judah was probably capable of writing literature on this scale. Since the Israelites/Judahites probably wrote on papyrus that does not survive Palestine's climate and historic military conflagrations, substantial evidence could have decayed away or gone up in smoke.

Linguistic Development

A third approach to dating biblical texts is the linguistic evolution of the Hebrew language. Hebrew became less spare as it developed, with, for example, more *plene* (vocalized) spellings at later stages of the language. Stages such as Early, Classical, and Late Biblical Hebrew have been proposed. Dating a text by its stage of Hebrew orthography and vocabulary can be unreliable because later authors/redactors may intentionally employ an archaizing style to make their works appear older than they are, and older texts may be updated in their language usage to fit with a later readership. Two general "sides" to the question of dating biblical texts by linguistic development have emerged, with scholars such as Avi Hurvitz (among many works, 2014, 1–11) attempting to set up reliable dating parameters based on linguistic development (with a sharp divide between the pre-exilic and postexilic periods), and others arguing that linguistic variation is the re-

sult of other factors such as style (Young and Rezetko 2014) or theological perspectives (Schmid 2019). Dong-Hyuk Kim (2013) has sought to apply sociolinguistic variation theory to identify the factors that can result in linguistic change, including socioeconomic class as well as socially intentional language change. As Jonathan Stökl has pointed out (Stökl 2014), such dating is vulnerable to circular reasoning, in which scholars posit diachronic development on linguistic (p. 21) bases and then use that chronology to produce a history of the language. Within the unprovenanced nature of the Hebrew Bible, as Stökl maintains, one must have some other anchors for dating before constructing a history of Biblical Hebrew. The volume of collected essays on Biblical Hebrew diachrony edited by Miller-Naudé and Zevit (2012) tackles a variety of issues on this topic.

Theology

If a chronology of the development of Israelite/early Jewish theology can be traced, then biblical texts could be placed along that timeline. Such chronologies typically see earlier Israelite theology as locally focused, henotheistic, and esteeming the king as divinely appointed, whereas later Israelite/early Jewish theologies are seen as more clearly monotheistic, with Yahweh being the universal god of the entire world and Yahweh's human agents being not the king but the priests of the Second Temple. Such an approach, for example, might enable the modern critic to regard the doxologies of Amos (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) as being relatively late due to their universalizing perspective, as well as the claims in Amos that God has provided exoduses also for the Arameans and Philistines (9:7).

Dating based on theological development, however, faces several challenges. (1) Various theologies likely existed concurrently within Israelite/Jewish communities, even within the same individual at different times. (2) A liturgical praise of a deity, or hymn, might not really reflect the speaker's true theology but rather the use of a traditional piece. (3) Praise of Yahweh as universal absolute deity does not necessarily reflect later, monotheistic theology. Hymns from all over the ancient Near East praise a single individual god or one's personal god as the chief deity, creator of the world, and absolute authority; such hymns existed in societies that were clearly polytheistic and generally regarded some other deity as chief and creator.

Intertextual Dependence

Dependence of one text upon another establishes a *terminus post quem* of the later text based on the date of the earlier text, if that date can be established. There are numerous passages in the Twelve that are identical or nearly so to other passages in the Twelve and in the Major Prophets. Perhaps most famously, Mic 4:1–4 is identical with Isa 2:2–4. If one of those texts is drawing on the other, establishing the date of the earlier one can aid in establishing the date of the latter. Likewise with Joel 3:16a and 18a (Heb. 4:16a and 18a being very similar to Amos 1:2 and 9:13b, respectively). Caution is advisable however in perceiving identical or very close wording as a case of intertextuality and dependence.

Even at its most literate, both pre- and postexilic Israel/Judah/Yehud was a mostly oral society, from which the written Hebrew Bible is only the tip of the iceberg. Expressions (p. 22) such as these duplicate passages could have been fairly common sayings or axioms in society. The Hebrew Bible is itself quite clear about the presence of proverbial sayings among regular people (1 Sam 10:12, 24:13; Ezek 12:22, 16:44, 18:2), and so identical expressions in prophetic books could simply emerge from the oral world rather than from each other. The situation is somewhat clearer where explicit reference is made to an earlier book. Such is the case with Jer 26:17–19, where Micah is clearly referred to as a prior prophet whose doom prophecy was averted.

Participation in Otherwise Datable Literary Strata

A major contribution of the project of seeingthe Twelve as having been composed or at least edited in order to form one book has been the identification of strata that straddle multiple books of the Twelve, such that several books in the Twelve received textual expansions (*Fortschreibungen*) at the same time and for the same purposes as other books in the collection (for general outline, cf. Kessler 2016). If these strata can be reliably dated, then it follows that their member texts can be dated as well, allowing for the dating of the various parts of the books of the Twelve in synchronicity with each other. This is apparent particularly in the work of Jakob Wöhrle, where the Joel-corpus, foreign-nations corpus I and II, salvation-for-the-nations corpus, and grace corpus penetrate through older and later books alike as the Twelve developed (Wöhrle 2010; for fuller treatment, see Wöhrle 2006 and 2008). One does not need to commit to a notion of a unified, comprehensively edited “Book of the Twelve” to see strata of simultaneous redaction occurring across several books, likely by the same hand. One can observe similarities between passages in Zech 14 and in Amos 9:11–15 that suggest common or at least contemporary authorship for those passages, without positing an overall “Book of the Twelve” redaction (Radine 2010, 205–210).

The “Persian Turn”

The final issue for dating to be discussed here is the increasing tendency of scholars to date biblical composition and editing to the Persian period. The recognition that much purportedly older biblical literature actually dates to the Persian period has roots in the nineteenth-century Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis, which held that the “Priestly” components of the Pentateuch were of Persian-era origin, and in Spinoza’s argument in his 1670 *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* that Ezra was the author of large amounts of the Hebrew Bible. The recent dating preference for the Persian period has occurred in tandem with the growing perception of the disconnects between the prophet named in a (p. 23) prophetic book and the book itself and the recognition of the extraordinary differences between ancient Near Eastern prophets and the works of literature that make up the biblical prophetic corpus. Reinhard Kratz has argued form-critically for observing the dis-

tinction between parts of a prophetic book that an ancient Near Eastern mantic would have actually said, and the "scribal prophecy" of the writers of literary works based on those mantic speakers (Kratz 2015, 27–35). Another factor contributing to the "Persian turn" is the effect of the "minimalism" phenomenon starting in the 1990s that took a historically skeptical position, basing historical study on the forms of the text in which we have them, that is, their Persian-period (and sometimes Hellenistic) final forms. "The claims for Persian-period influence or origins have ballooned" (Bautch and Lackowski 2019, 1) in the past twenty years.

A Persian-period (or later) dating is, of course, appropriate for books self-dated to that era, such as Haggai and Zechariah. It is also generally appropriate for the late additions completing the final form of an older book where the last additions to the book show clear late indicators, such as reference to the Jerusalem temple having been destroyed and/or rebuilt. Dating too much material to the Persian era, however, comes with some risks. As Bautch and Lackowski have pointed out, Persian-dated material until recently has tended to just be dumped there "without adequately trying to determine when, by whom, or why material was incorporated into earlier texts over this 200-year period" (Bautch and Lackowski 2019, 1). The Persian era becomes a sort of black hole where anything can go. Assigning so much biblical material to that two-century era can end up telescoping a diverse range of material into too limited a cultural frame. The extraordinary diversity of biblical literature in general and certainly of the Twelve in particular indicates that biblical literature is the result of a long period of growth, longer than the Persian period would allow by itself. Some scholars acknowledge this pre-Persian process of the growth of books with roots in the pre-Persian past but choose to read the books only in their Persian-era settings through the eyes of their presumably Persian-era, final-form readers and hearers. Considering only the Persian dates for books that may have older material can be a way to avoid the difficulty of ascertaining the dates for earlier material by undertaking redaction criticism. Overlooking a key of research is problematic, however uncertain its results inevitably may be.

In order to reconstruct a Persian-dated setting for biblical books, one should have some notion of how and where the books dated to the period were produced. An important scholar on this topic is Ehud Ben Zvi, who places far more weight on a Persian-period, final form reading of a book than on a book's possible earlier strata (among many other works, Ben Zvi 2009a). He sees the production of significant portions of the Hebrew Bible in the city and area of Jerusalem in the Persian period. Ben Zvi recognizes the consequence of this view: so much literary production occurring in such a small area at the same time suggests that various authors must have been aware of each other's work. For this reason, Ben Zvi sees the intertextuality of similar books, such as prophetic books, as the result of this constant interaction, which he calls the "integrative" composition phenomenon (Ben Zvi 2009a). This writing community would have been too (p. 24) small to have entire separate schools of thought, literary traditions, or movements in isolation from each other.

Several aspects of Ben Zvi's perspective may be questioned. He suggests that ancient writers were aware of these contradictions within the Hebrew Bible but allowed them to stand due to their shared fundamental overarching beliefs. This reconstruction, however, places an extraordinary amount of diversity of beliefs and teachings within this small community. In addition, Ben Zvi maintains that substantial amounts of prophetic material were produced in Jerusalem rather than Babylonia because the material is focused on Jerusalem and its temple, there are few references to life in Babylon, and all of the prophets with the exception of Ezekiel are placed by the texts in Judah or Israel (Ben Zvi 2009a). A focus on Jerusalem, however, does not require a body of texts to have been geographically written there. The Babylonian Talmud has copious amounts of material focused on Jerusalem and Israel, places separated from the Talmudic writers by much distance, and on the destroyed Jerusalem temple, separated by much time, even though it was written in Mesopotamia.

Clear criteria need to be established to determine what dates a text to the Persian period, and some criteria have been suggested. Typical of postexilic indicators are assumptions of priestly versus monarchic leadership (whether approved or disapproved of by the prophet) and the presence of eschatological material. Michael Floyd has proposed that the entire genre of the "prophetic book" is a Persian-period creation (Floyd 2006). In his view, pre-exilic prophetical utterances were recorded by scribes based on the relevance of the utterances to the rulers whom the scribes served; they were sometimes kept for extended periods of time in order to observe their reliability as events played out. This latter action was part of a process of discovering patterns in Yahweh's interaction with the human world that would be of future benefit. Some of these prophecies depicted exile, and this feature attracted the interest of exilic and postexilic scribes in order to subject the prophetic records to further interpretation. Three factors contributed to the formation of this new genre: (1) disruption of the previous *worldview* of the Judahites in which a king in the upper world interacted with a king in the earthly world, which occurred due to the (2) disruption of the *demographic* order of Judahite life after the monarchy was destroyed and the upper classes exiled away. Resulting from these developments, (3) *scribes* became all the more important as transmitters of divine words. Postexilic scribes added considerable amounts of material to the pre-exilic recorded prophetic speeches, making the case through this "scribal prophecy" that the pre-exilic prophets' utterances were being fulfilled in the scribes' present and had future relevance. For Floyd, a "prophetic book" is always a work of reinterpretation. Even decidedly postexilic prophets were probably also involved in the scribal process and interpretations of their books. Floyd's work, however, does raise questions: were not prophetic writings redacted and reinterpreted in written form also in the (perhaps late) monarchic era? How are those stages not also prophetic books?

The "Persian period" as a whole is two centuries long and should be itself divisible into periods rather than just becoming a cloud of sameness. A typical breakdown into periods is "Early Persian," dating from 539 (conquest of Babylon by Cyrus)—486 (death (p. 25) of Darius I); "Middle Persian," dating from 486 to 398 (one proposed date of the arrival of Ezra to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes II); and "Late Persian," dating from 398

to 323 (death of Alexander and beginning of the Diadochi). For these matters, see Bautch and Lackowski (2019, 8–9; the whole volume is devoted to greater precision in Persian-period biblical text dating) and Berquist (2016) for a general history of the Persian period and biblical prophecy’s place within it.

David Carr has proposed ways of determining general earliness or lateness within the Persian period based on traits of the biblical texts. In his view, early Persian-period biblical texts use archaic Hebrew and feature sometimes extravagant hopes for a return to sovereignty, whereas late Persian texts will show more regard for a combined Pentateuch, Priestly writings, and support of Persian sponsorship; they also will feature Aramaisms and Persian isoglosses (Carr 2019). Since, as noted earlier, reference to specific historical incidents can help date a text, the specific references to Zerubbabel and the priest Joshua in Zech 3–4 suggest that this particular text should be dated fairly close to or within the lives/activities of those historical figures (Tiemeyer 2019). Erhard Gerstenberger has suggested that Persian-period texts show the influence of certain Zoroastrian ideas. These would include depictions of prophets engaging in dialogue with the deity (as Zoroaster does with Ahura-Mazda), absolute moral idealism, and apocalypticism (Gerstenberger 2009).

A bold effort to date the entirety of a traditionally early book to the Persian era, with some precision on when in the Persian era it belongs, is the work of James Bos on the book of Hosea (Bos 2013). Bos grants the presence of earlier material in the book yet takes a synchronic approach, arguing that “all redactional analyses of the book of Hosea are highly hypothetical” (2013, 30). He questions whether such a literary work as Hosea could have been produced in the eighth century (based on his somewhat minimalist view of the development of Israelite literacy) and whether such an anti-monarchic book as Hosea would have been written and preserved among Northern scribes working for the Israelite royal court (suggesting that most scribes worked for the royal court). In Bos’s view, postexilic priests, independent of the former monarchs and blaming them for Judah’s disaster, are the more likely authors. These priests would also have delivered a subtle swipe at the imperially appointed governors of Judah as latter-day kings.

Noting Hosea’s polemics against Benjaminite leadership and shrines, Bos argues that the Benjamin region had no distinctive power in the eighth century BCE but that in the postexilic period was the site of Jerusalem’s rival leadership at Mizpah. In his reconstruction, the book is in part attacking that rival power base. His argument is similar for Hosea’s condemnations of Bethel; Bos argues that no Israelite writer would condemn a royal Israelite shrine and that there is no evidence of anti-Bethel rhetoric before Josiah’s possible reform and thus the Bethel condemnations refer to the rival shrine at Bethel opposed by the Jerusalem-focused returnees. Bos sees the themes of “exile” and “return” as less likely for the northern kingdom under the Assyrians (from whom return was most unlikely) than for the Judahites in the Persian period, for whom return was a reality. He also finds it odd that in the eighth century Israel would be presented as sandwiched between the two supposedly equal powers of Assyria and Egypt, when at the (p. 26) time Egypt was far weaker. This presentation better fits the situation of Judah’s last years, when the

population's loyalties vacillated between the then-stronger Egypt and Babylon. Bos further identifies numerous intertextual connections to other biblical passages, which he dates to the seventh or sixth centuries BCE. For these reasons, he dates the book of Hosea to the late sixth or early fifth centuries BCE, the early Persian period, when the conditions that he supposes for the book's composition existed.

While Bos's work is ambitious, it unnecessarily excludes monarchic Judah as a producer of some or all of the book. Hosea's anti-monarchism, if directed against the *northern* kings by a southern author, as well as its attacks on northern sites, fits well with the tension between Israel/Samaria and Judah in the decades prior to and following the defeat of the northern kingdom. Bos's daring work is notable as an example of the kind of arguments needed to date one of the Twelve's supposedly earliest books to the Persian period in its entirety. It is common to date the entirety of the book of Jonah out of its eighth-century setting to the Persian period, but a book such as Hosea presents far greater challenges to late dating, making Bos's arguments for a Persian-period dating fascinating even if one does not agree with them.

Concluding Remarks Concerning Persian-Period Dating

The "Persian turn" in biblical scholarship at times seems to overcompensate for the historical-positivist credulity of earlier generations of scholars. It places too much diverse biblical material in too short a time, since too little change occurred in Yehud to account for the Hebrew Bible's diversity. The apt recognition in much of recent scholarship that the named prophets are probably not the authors of the books attributed to them does not mean that we should consequently date earlier-set books so far from their own settings, into the Persian period. My own work on Amos (Radine 2010) is an attempt to find a properly balanced dating and understanding of the book, disconnected from its author but not significantly disconnected from its monarchic, Iron Age setting and concerns. There is no doubt that the Persian period was a time of absolutely extraordinary compositional, redactional, and editorial work on the part of the Jewish communities of Yehud and probably also of Babylonia, a time unparalleled for biblical production. The sheer variety of voices and concerns expressed in the Hebrew Bible as a whole and even in the Twelve itself, however, shows that these Persian-period writers were working with significant amounts of earlier material. Despite the fact that identifying these earlier materials creates unresolvable uncertainties, we give up the search for these redactional stages at our own historical loss. As shown throughout this essay, historical dating of biblical texts, including the Minor Prophets, is full of difficulties and pitfalls, but this is the stimulating challenge of historical biblical research.

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One Book or Twelve Books?

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explains debates about whether the Minor Prophets are twelve separate books or a unified collection. Throughout much of Jewish and Christian history, the twelve "books" of the Minor Prophets have been studied as discrete entities. Some ancient traditions treat the Minor Prophets or the Book of the Twelve as one literary unit, causing modern scholars to consider their unity. In the 1990s, scholars began to notice editorial activity and larger themes in the Minor Prophets, suggesting that the writings within should be read, heard, and studied as one large book. There is still merit in studying each individual book because each book offers unique material. There is also merit in studying the Book of the Twelve as a unity because each of the books helps to interpret the others in the collection.

Keywords: Keywords: themes, diachronic, synchronic, editorial activity, tradition history, catchwords, literati, Book of Remembrance

WHEN one considers the collection of writings in the Hebrew as both "The Book of the Twelve" and the "Minor Prophets," one can find among interpreters a variety of ways to read, hear, conceptualize, and understand the writings in this collection. One of the primary questions that has perplexed interpreters the last half a century is whether these twelve writings ought to be read together as twelve segments of a larger book or individually as stand-alone writings. There are advantages and disadvantages to both interpretive frameworks, and the ways in which the two options can work together and complement one another. For that reason, when one asks, "The Twelve prophets, one book or twelve?" it is not without merit to respond, "Yes, one and twelve!"

For much of Jewish and Christian history, interpreters have studied the individual "books" in the Minor Prophets as discrete works, composed by the individual prophet for whom the "book" is named, but this mode of interpretation has not been the only model. In the ancient world, the Twelve were housed on one scroll and therefore treated as a single book. In the 1990s the status of the Twelve as "one book" became a new point of inquiry. What issues arise from these twelve writings being preserved on a single scroll? The fol-

lowing essay will offer avenues and resources for navigating the interpretation of the Twelve as one book and many.

Early Jewish and Christian Traditions

There is good reason to suggest that early interpreters of the Twelve considered the collection as a single book. Ancient Jewish traditions suggest that, because the Twelve writings were collected onto one scroll, they were typically thought of as a single book, one fourth of the witness of the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve). One finds the first reference to the Twelve Prophets as a corpus in Sirach, dating to about (p. 30) 180 BCE. Sirach displays a developing sense of canon by referring to the "law and the prophets" in the prologue. Near the end of Sirach, one finds a poetic piece in which the author links great kings to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and "the bones of the twelve prophets" who "comforted the people of Jacob" (Sirach 49:10). In addition to Sirach, two writings from the first century number the books of the Hebrew Bible differently. Josephus refers to twenty-two books within the Hebrew Bible (*Ag. Ap*. 1.40) and 4 Ezra 14 counts twenty-four. The modern count of thirty-nine appears nowhere. This discrepancy is easily understood when one remembers that the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles were not subdivided into two and that the Twelve Prophets were housed on one scroll, thus making the Twelve writings one book (Nogalski 2011a, 2).

The Babylonian Talmud also treats the Twelve uniquely by allowing fewer spaces between each writing than between other canonical books. Within the Talmud, Baba Batra 14b treats the Twelve collectively when referring to the teaching of the sages: "The Sages taught: The order of the books of the Prophets when they are attached together is as follows: Joshua and Judges, Samuel and Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and Isaiah and the Twelve Prophets." In addition, the Masoretic notes in the Leningrad Codex indicate the total number of verses in the Twelve at the close of Malachi and mark the central verse at Mic 3:12, indicating that the Masoretes thought of the Twelve as a single book. Despite these early Jewish traditions, which treat the Twelve as a single Book, early rabbinic interpreters tended to comment on distinct writings in the Twelve rather than the Twelve as a whole. Similarly, the *pesharim* of Qumran deal with the writings individually. Nevertheless, one does find among the rabbis at least some acknowledgment that the order of the Twelve mattered for interpretation. In the *Aggada*, several rabbis deal with the interplay between Jonah and Nahum in ways that suggest an understanding of the chronological framework present in the order of the Twelve in the MT. These interpreters find it telling that Jonah precedes Nahum and provide an early consecutive reading of the Twelve (Ego 2003).

Early Christian interpreters also display a proclivity toward reading the Twelve as a single book. Among the early church leaders, Mileto Bishop of Sardis refers to the Twelve as "the Twelve in one book" (*Book of Extracts*). Similarly, Jerome's Vulgate mentions a tradition holding "The Twelve is one Book" and provides an interpretive suggestion that one read the six undated writings as dating to the time of the last king mentioned (*Biblia*

Sacra Vulgata 1969, 2:1374). Augustine has, perhaps, had the greatest influence on Christian interpretation of the Twelve. Augustine's writing contains the first mention of the "Minor Prophets" with reference to Hosea through Malachi, linking this title to the length of the individual writings. Since the "books" of Hosea through Malachi were shorter than Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, they were labeled "minor" while the latter were "major." Though Augustine's aim was likely merely to differentiate Hosea through Malachi from the longer prophetic books, the epithet "minor" may have resulted in a tendency among Christian interpreters to overlook these smaller writings for the glow of their more "major" siblings. At any rate, Augustine's categorization of the Twelve does not appear to be aimed at marking them out as a single book but merely at setting them apart from the "major" prophets.

(p. 31) One complicating factor whenever one intends to view the collection as a whole is that different traditions put the writings of the Twelve in different orders. The following table will illustrate the differences.

Masoretic Text	**Septuagint**
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos
Amos	Micah
Obadiah	*Joel*
Jonah	*Obadiah*
Micah	*Jonah*

One strong possibility is that the translators of the LXX moved Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah in an effort to smooth out the chronology and keep the three eighth-century prophets together. For instance, the LXX displays this tendency of moving books to their more "historical" location in its displacement of Ruth from the Writings to be next to Judges (among others). The LXX might similarly have moved the three undated writings (Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah) in order that the three eighth-century prophets could be together. Alternatively, Barry Alan Jones has argued for the priority of the LXX over the MT (Jones 1995). Yet another order occurs in a Qumran manuscript in which Jonah follows Malachi (see Fuller 1996).

The Modern Era

The ancient understanding of the Twelve as a single book largely fell by the wayside in the modern era. With the advent of Higher Criticism, each of the Twelve prophets became an individual who lurked in the pages of Israel's great history. The interpreter's job was to discover the historical situation from which Hosea, Joel, Amos, and others came and to discern in precisely which situation they would have spoken the timely words recorded in their individual books. Isolating the exact words that the prophets spoke (the *ipsum verba*) from later additions to the writing was the interpreter's task. Personas developed around each prophet. Amos, a lowly farmer from Tekoa, was called by God to preach a message of social justice to the fattened rich of Samaria. Hosea, a faithful prophet of God, married Gomer, a wily and unfaithful woman, as a sign to Israel that Israel had become an unfaithful partner to God (see Koch 1983, 1984; also commentaries on the individual prophets from the 1920s to the 1980s). Discovering the prophet's history and the setting in life from which the prophet spoke the words of the scriptures was the primary pursuit of the interpreter. For several of the writings in the Book of the Twelve, interpreters who sought the prophetic persona were met with difficulty. Many of the writings in the Twelve contain little to no biographical information concerning the prophet. Indeed, six of the twelve contain no contextualizing information within the superscription.

(p. 32) "One Book" in the 1990s and Beyond

A reinvigoration of considering the Twelve as a single book emerged in the early 1990s with the publication of James Nogalski's two monographs which promoted the idea that the Twelve were edited together as an evolving, single book, and with the advent of the SBL seminar on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve (Nogalski 1993a, 1993b). While there had been some discussion in scholarly corners concerning the unity, development, and redaction of the Twelve beginning in the 1920s,[1] the primary mode for interpreting the Twelve, even among scholars, had been to isolate the individual writing and interpret it as a stand-alone book.

Diachronic Approaches

When Nogalski published his two monographs in 1993, the guild was ready to embrace an approach to the Twelve that promoted three things: their unity, intentionality behind the order of the writings, and a sustained editing process across the growing and evolving collection of writings. In Nogalski's hypothesis, the Book of the Twelve grew from two preexisting corpora. One, which has come to be called the Book of the Four (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah), shows signs of an editorial process in which the superscriptions link to one another and deuteronomistic themes appear (Nogalski 1993a, 21–212). According to Nogalski, Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah were edited together during the exile. The second preexisting corpus comprises portions of Haggai and Zech 1–8, a postexilic collection focusing on the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of the

community (Nogalski 1993a, 216–263). To these literary precursors, Nogalski hypothesizes that a Joel-related layer was added in the late Persian period (Nogalski 1993b, 1–180). This layer, comprised of Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi, brought new dimensions to the growing collection. For instance, Joel, unlike the other writings which existed and circulated previous to their inclusion in the growing collection of the Twelve, was a scribal creation intended to unify the writings present in the growing collection (Nogalski 1993b, 1–48). Last, Jonah and Zech 9–14 were incorporated in the early Hellenistic period (Nogalski 1993b, 213–270).

Paramount among Nogalski's claims is that a scribe knit the writings of the Twelve together through a series of catchwords at the seams of each of the writings (Nogalski 1993b, 42). For example, at the seams of Joel (3:16; Heb. 4:16) and Amos (1:2), one finds the identical phrase, "YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem he utters his voice." The catchword phenomenon at the seams of the writings only "works" in the order of the writings in the MT. Nogalski also notes that the order of the MT appears to be intentionally chronological, beginning with the prophets of the eighth century and moving through the fall of the Israel and Judah and ending in the postexilic period (notably skipping over the exile all together).

(p. 33) Nogalski's hypothesis inspired further work concerning the unity, growth, and redaction of the Twelve. In 1998, Aaron Schart developed his own model for the growth and redaction of the Twelve. Schart focuses on the implications of the growing corpus of writings on Amos and posits that Hosea and Amos existed as a two-book collection that preceded the Book of the Four (Schart 1998). Following Schart, Jakob Wöhrle published another explanation of the formation of the Book of the Twelve (Wöhrle 2006, 2008). Wöhrle envisions an editorial process in which several different layers were added to the growing corpus through the centuries, leaving editorial deposits in certain writings. According to Wöhrle, Joel developed along with each new editorial layer.[2]

Synchronic Approaches

Apart from the thoroughgoing diachronic approaches that point out editorial activity through time, several scholars have undertaken more synchronic approaches to the Twelve which consider thematic characteristics that unify the entire corpus. In 1990, before the publication of Nogalski's dissertation, Paul House undertook a synchronic reading of the Twelve entitled *The Unity of the Twelve* (House 1990). House suggests that the Twelve is a book with plot, structure, and a specific genre. House argues that the Twelve is an Aristotelian comedy that follows a U-shaped plot structure; the Twelve reaches a low point in Nahum through Habakkuk and then moves toward resolution in Haggai through Malachi. Hosea through Micah introduce the problem of the sin of Israel and Judah; Nahum through Zephaniah display the punishment; and Haggai through Malachi relate the restoration of the people of God. In a similar way both Terence Collins and R. J. Coggins suggest that the Book of the Twelve ought to be read as a unified book, similar to Isaiah (Collins 1993; Coggins 1994). Collins goes so far as to say that the primary difference between the Twelve and Isaiah is that the headings of each writing in the Twelve

have been maintained, while, due to and editorial process, the headings in Isaiah have been lost (Collins 1993, 64–65).

In a collection of essays inspired by the SBL group on the formation of the Twelve, Rolf Rendtorff suggests that the unifying theme of the Twelve when read as a single book is the "day of YHWH" (Rendtorff 2000). Rendtorff demonstrates that when one reads the Twelve as a book, the "day of YHWH" referenced in Joel informs how one understands the "day of YHWH" in the writings that follow Joel. Joel introduces the reader to the moments of YHWH's decisive action (days of YHWH) which will occur as the Twelve unfolds (Rendtorff 1998, 187–191). Consequently, the reader is prepared as he or she encounters days of YHWH in the subsequent writings of the Twelve.

Rendtorff's claim is echoed in David Peterson's essay in the same volume, in which Petersen notes that the phrase "the day of YHWH" occurs in each of the writings of the Twelve with the exception of Jonah (in Nahum the phrase is implicitly present in 1:7) (Petersen 2000, 9). In addition, Peterson notes that, comparatively, the phrase is used sparsely in the Major Prophets. The "day of the YHWH" as a major theme in the Twelve has been largely accepted whether one reads the Twelve as one book or many.

(p. 34) Yet another unifying theme is suggested by Bowman's 2006 article "Reading the Twelve as One," in which he claims that the Hebrew concept of *shub* or return/repent is the guiding theme of the entire corpus (Bowman 2006). Bowman contends that the theme of "return," writ large in Hos 1–3 and Malachi, serves as bookends that can help the interpreter understand the "great metanarrative" of God's redemptive history moving through the Twelve (Bowman 2006, 6). Taking cues from Bowman's proposal but expanding them, Jason LeCureux argues that the proliferation of the word *shub* in Hosea-Joel and Zechariah-Malachi—specifically in the imperative form—functions as "a controlling theme that places the message of the Twelve in perspective" (LeCureux 2012, 23). The cumulative message of the Twelve, then, becomes "return to me and I will return to you."

In addition to these themes, Nogalski has noted that the fertility of the land looms large in the Twelve (Nogalski 2007, 128–130). He observes that the triad of "grain, wine, and oil" recurs throughout the Twelve as a way to indicate the land's fertility/infertility. Nogalski (and others) also point to the many intertextual uses of Exod 34:6–7 in the Twelve. These intertextual citations provide a means to explore YHWH's mercy and justice (Nogalski 2007, 131–135).

Both the diachronic and synchronic methods point toward an intentionality in the editing process of the Twelve. Based on these studies, there is good evidence that, at least on some level, those who formed the Twelve thought of the collection as a unity.

"Many Books"

Though reading the Twelve as a unified, edited book has gained in favorability since the 1990s, the method has not been without detractors. Most vocal and prominent among these detractors has been Ehud Ben Zvi. A touchpoint for the differences between Ben

Zvi's understating of the writings of the Twelve and that of Nogalski (and others) is found in the 2009 publication *Two Sides of a Coin: Juxtaposing Views on Interpreting the Book of the Twelve/the Twelve Prophetic Books* (Ben Zvi, Nogalski, and Römer 2009). Ben Zvi calls into question models which suggest that the Twelve was edited throughout time. Ben Zvi contends that it is impossible for interpreters to discern editorial activity because the editorial activity is aimed at assimilating earlier versions into a new version without being detected. In his mind, modern interpreters cannot properly discern thoroughgoing editorial activity through the ages when only having access to the final edited form (Ben Zvi, Nogalski, and Römer 2009, 58–63). Ben Zvi suggests that one does better to focus on the Persian period readers/interpreters (or *literati*) of the final form of the individual writings. This argumentation is persuasive as redactional models for the Twelve abound. How can one be sure that his or her recreation of the editorial process is correct?

Julia O'Brien agrees with Ben Zvi's objection and opts to examine the discrete writings of the Twelve from the standpoint of the Persian period, when the writings would have reached (or nearly reached) their final form. Additionally, by the Persian period, one can be fairly certain that the writings of the Twelve would have been seen as authoritative. (p. 35) The reinterpretation of these texts in the Persian period would provide the literati of Yehud with texts for interpreting their own historical situation in light of the words of the (more) ancient prophets. For instance, examining Micah from the standpoint of the Persian period provides the interpretive payoff of both explaining the Babylonian Exile (Mic 3) and providing hope for an idealized future (Mic 7) (O'Brien 2015, xlix).[3]

In addition to the aforementioned objections, proponents of the "many books" view argue that the preservation of the superscriptions for each discrete writing in the Twelve indicates that the ancient readers/interpreters of the Twelve considered the writings therein to be stand-alone prophetic utterances (Ben Zvi, Nogalski, and Römer 2009, 80). Furthermore, ancient readers/interpreters tended to assign authority to a text not on the basis of the text itself but on the basis of the authority of the text's author (see, for instance, appeals to Moses, Isaiah, David, or even Micah [Jer 26:18]) (Ben Zvi, Nogalski, and Römer 2009, 80). Additionally, ancient interpretations among the rabbis and *pesherim* of the Dead Sea Scrolls that treat the Twelve as a book are scarce; these interpreters tended to focus on individual prophets (Ben Zvi, Nogalski, and Römer 2009, 69–72).

The writings themselves also lend to the idea that they are to be read individually. The style, purpose, theology, and even the genre shift from writing to writing. Hosea, for example, is incredibly difficult and uneven in Hebrew while many of the other writings read more smoothly. Similarly, Jonah is quite idiosyncratic in the realm of ancient prophecy, reading more like a satirical short story than a prophetic writing. If one endeavors to read the Twelve as a single book, he or she will encounter many bumps along the way.

Concluding Remarks

The rich history of interpreting the Twelve writings individually has borne much fruit. Each writing is unique, and gains can be made from interpreting each individual writing.

Amos uniquely promotes social justice in the context of a fattened upper class who “sells the poor for a pair of sandals” (Amos 8:6). Hosea performs an unusual sign-act that calls Israel to turn from its idolatry. Jonah, the reluctant prophet, sullenly watches as God spares Nineveh. Micah, the prophet from the country, delivers a timely word to the leadership in Jerusalem. Nahum provides prophetic rejoicing when Nineveh finally receives itsjust desserts. Habakkuk uniquely addresses theodicy by retaining faith in the midst of the coming calamity of Jerusalem’s destruction. Zephaniah proclaims a peculiar word of judgment in the context of (good!) King Josiah’s reign as well as a word of hopeful renewal. Haggai calls for a renewed emphasis on the rebuilding of the temple in the postexilic era, while Zechariah places focus on systems of leadership in the newly founded community. Finally, Malachi instructs God’s people concerning right worship. In addition to its primary message, each writing contains idiosyncrasies that cannot easily be explained away through diachronic or synchronic models. Notably, even the diachronic (p. 36) models that suggest that the Twelve was edited together point to preexisting texts which were originally composed to stand alone (save, perhaps, Joel). These writings can certainly stand alone and offer much benefit in focusing on each writing’s unique contribution.

It is more difficult to discern the specific message of a writing such as Joel when it is not contextualized within the Twelve. Joel weaves together so many different images of “days of YHWH” with locusts, invading armies, famine, calls to repentance, and ultimate renewal that one feels adrift as the images hit, one after the other, with no superscription to orient the reader as to time or place. When one reads Joel in the context of the Twelve, however, the four locust plagues in Joel 1:2–4 prepare the reader for the three major calamities that will play out as the narrative of the Twelve unfolds with a fourth plague looming in the future.

Similarly, Jonah would be very odd if it were not placed before Nahum. It is crucially important that the account of YHWH’s mercy on Nineveh come before YHWH’s complete destruction of Nineveh. The placement of Jonah before Nahum (both writings lack superscriptions with dating information) speaks to the intentionality with which the Twelve were ordered. In addition, Obadiah appears out of place among eighth-century prophets (because Obadiah appears to discuss the destruction of Jerusalem in the sixth century) in the MT. The position of Obadiah is more understandable when one notices the links between Obadiah and the writings on either side of it (Amos and Micah) (see Sieges and Werse, 2020). Similarly, Malachi the parentless, timeless, and perhaps nameless[4] prophet gains context for his message by virtue of being placed at the end of the Twelve.

As a whole, the Twelve appears to have a purpose. The writings are organized so as to tell the story of God’s interaction with God’s people from “the time of the Assyrian kings until now” (Neh 9:32). Ending the prophetic messages in what appears to be the Persian period with Malachi, the Twelve functions in two ways: first, as a “book of Remembrance” (Mal 3:16) for the people of God to consider their past (Nogalski 2016) and second as a warning not to repeat past mistakes, lest the fourth calamity, foreshadowed in Joel 1, should come upon them.

When all things are considered, the interpreter does well to answer the question of one book or many with a resounding, “Yes.” The Twelve writings can stand on their own, and one’s reading is enhanced when they are read together. The Twelve prophets tell a continuous story from the time of the kings of Assyria until the Persian period. They share themes and editorial activity. Nevertheless, each writing is unique in its contribution and context. Interpreters will likely continue to explore the benefits of reading the Twelve as one book and many. The Twelve will likely continue to lurk in the conceptual space in between one and many.

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Notes:

([1.]) For examples of scholars treating the Twelve as a book before Nogalski, see Budde (1922) and Wolfe (1935).

([2.]) Many others have undertaken diachoronic reconstructions of portions of the Twelve, or specific writings in the Twelve. See, for instance, Vielhauer (2007).

([3.]) Ben Zvi (1996), O’Brien (2004), and Bornand (2007) all suggest that interpreters may do well to examine the intertextual development of the Twelve with other writings within the Hebrew Bible. This sort of an evaluation complicates the catchphrases and themes that one discovers when exploration is limited to the Twelve.

([4.]) *Malachi* means “my messenger” and may or may not be the name of a prophet.

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Textual History of the Minor Prophets: Hebrew Manuscripts and Versions

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay discusses the textual history of the Minor Prophets in the Hebrew manuscripts and the Versions, excluding Qumran. The most important textual tradition for the Minor Prophets is the Hebrew Masoretic Text tradition from the medieval period (MT), which continues the earlier proto-masoretic textual tradition that is represented in the Qumran scrolls and is the basis of the translations of the Targums and Peshitta. The Septuagint (LXX) is the most important ancient Version of the Hebrew Bible, because it was the first complete translation and because its Hebrew source differed considerably from the other textual witnesses. Other important Versions of the Hebrew Bible are the Targums, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Latin Vulgate.

Keywords: Keywords: Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targum, Peshitta, Vulgate, Old Latin, Versions

(p. 41) THE Hebrew manuscripts, especially the medieval manuscripts of the Masoretic Text (MT) tradition, represent the most important text tradition we possess for the Minor Prophets and all the Old Testament. There are several reasons this is true: (1) being in Hebrew, the MT manuscripts have not undergone the changes that inevitably accompany translation into another language; (2) their text is distinct from the Hebrew and Greek texts from the Judean Desert; (3) they have been carefully preserved; and (4) they serve as the basis for most modern translations (Brotzman and Tully 2016, 59).

Simply because the MT texts are the most important tradition for textual criticism and exegesis does not make them the default text, in the sense that we assume the MT reading is always inherently better than the other textual traditions. In the words of Brotzman and Tully, "The MT is an accurately transmitted and preserved expression of the proto-MT, which existed alongside several other texts in the Second Temple period. None of those texts has a fundamental right to primacy" (Brotzman and Tully 2016, 59; see also Tov 2012, 272–273; Würthwein 2014, 189–190). This essay introduces the main textual witnesses for the Minor Prophets.

Hebrew Witnesses

The earliest Hebrew witnesses to the Minor Prophets are from the Judean Desert (see Pajunen essay). The next earliest Hebrew witnesses, which represent the Masoretic textual tradition that became normative in Judaism, are early medieval manuscripts. This textual tradition was preserved and transmitted within rabbinic Judaism, and the closely (p. 42) related manuscripts in this tradition are distinguished by four important components: the consonantal text, vocalization of the text, spacing and accents, and marginal notes (called *Masorah parva* and *magna*) (Würthwein 2014, 15, 37–39). There is evidence of a proto-masoretic textual stream (the consonantal text) before the rabbinic period in the Qumran scrolls, and the MT texts continue this tradition. This proto-masoretic text also served as the basis of the translations of the Targums and the Peshitta during the Rabbinic period (Würthwein 2014, 15–17; Brotzman and Tully 2016, 49–51; the rabbinic period is here defined as 70 CE—1000 CE).

Three of the Masoretic codices are especially important for the text of the Minor Prophets (for a discussion of other important MT manuscripts, see Tov 2012, 44–46; Brotzman and Tully, 2016, 56–58; Würthwein 2014, 39–44). The Leningrad Codex (MT^{L}) contains all the Old Testament and is the base text for the standard critical editions used today, *BHS* and *BHQ*. It is largely of the Ben Asher tradition, and according to its colophon, it dates to 1008 CE (Brotzman and Tully 2016, 58; Würthwein 2014, 41–42). Gelston comments that "although a few of the Masoretic notes are barely legible, the text itself is clearly legible throughout" (Gelston 2010, 5). The Aleppo Codex (MT^{A}) dates from about 925 CE. This was the oldest and best masoretic codex of the entire Old Testament before it was partially burned in a synagogue fire in 1947. According to an early colophon, its pointing, accents, and Masorah were written by Aaron ben Asher himself. This codex is extant for Hos 1:1–Amos 8:12; Mic 5:1–Zeph 3:20; and Zech 9:17–Mal 3:24.[1] Thirdly, the Cairo Codex (M^{C}) contains the text of the Prophets (Former and Latter). Although its second colophon claims it was "written and pointed by Moses ben Asher in Tiberius in the year 895" (Würthwein 2016, 40), it is closer to the Ben Naphtali tradition (another family of Tiberian Masoretes) than it is to the Ben Asher tradition, and probably dates to the eleventh century CE (Fresch 2016, 589; Tov 2012, 45–46).

Each book in this collection of texts called the Minor Prophets had "its own composition, redaction, and transmission until it became a part of the larger collection," and the Minor Prophets can only be thought of as "a single transmission unit" after the collection is complete (Fuller 2016, 606). On the basis of Ben Sira 49:10, which was written about 180 BCE, some think the collection may have been completed by that time. The earliest physical evidence that the Minor Prophets existed as a single unit is from the first half of the first century BCE,[2] and the earliest manuscript evidence in both Hebrew and Greek groups them together in a distinct collection (except in the genre of *pesharim*). Smaller units likely existed before that time.

The best critical Hebrew text available is the *BHQ* edition of *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, prepared by Anthony Gelston. This edition uses the three major Tiberian manuscripts discussed earlier, collating M^A and M^C with the base manuscript M^L. In addition to its critical edition of the Hebrew text of the Minor Prophets, *BHQ* on *The Twelve Minor Prophets* also contains an Introduction, Notes on the Masorah Parva, Notes on the Masorah Magna, and a very helpful Commentary on the Critical Apparatus.[3] In the apparatus Gelston notes fifty-two cases of graphical errors in M^L compared with M^C and (where extant) M^A. There are also frequent inaccuracies in the Masoretic notes in M^L, because it is the product of the text of another subgroup being (p. 43) corrected according to a Ben Asher manuscript;[4] details on these inaccuracies are given in the Notes on the Masorah. *BHQ* also contains a chart showing the differences in the divisions into sections in the text of these three manuscripts and another chart of the differences of the divisions between sections in M^L and the scrolls from around the Dead Sea. There are twenty-eight *Ketib/Qere* (written/read) readings in the Minor Prophets text of *BHQ* (Gelston 2010, 5).

Much of the scholarly discussion of the Hebrew text of the Minor Prophets relates to editorial changes in the books and what parts of the text are original and what parts are a later revision.[5] However, the textual issues for each of the books in this collection are distinct, and these issues have generated much more discussion for some books than for others. While there is little problem with books like Haggai, Malachi, and especially Amos, there are many more textual problems with the Hebrew of other books, especially Hosea and Micah.[6]

Scholars have commonly thought that the Hebrew text of Hosea is obscure and corrupt, and therefore they have tried to reconstruct it by the use of ancient Versions, comparative philology, and conjecture.[7] Fresch points out two recent responses to this understanding of the text of Hosea (Fresch 2016, 591). First, Andersen and Freedman suggest the text of Hosea is not and should not be understood to be “typical classical Hebrew prose or poetry” (1980, 59); it may be difficult and contain errors but that does not mean it is corrupt. Somewhat similarly, Macintosh argues that the uniformity of style and vocabulary in Hosea reflects the language of the prophet and much of the text accurately represents “an authentic literary language of the North which contained elements discernably different from that of Jerusalem and the South” (Macintosh 1997, lv). In this regard it is interesting to compare the different conclusions concerning the Hebrew text of Hosea in Harper’s 1905 ICC volume and Macintosh’s 1997 edition of that commentary. Whereas Harper thought the text of Hosea was one of the most corrupt in the OT and reconstructed the MT text freely (Harper 1905, clxxiii–clxxviii), Macintosh finds only four instances where the consonantal text of the MT should be corrected (Macintosh 1997, lxxiv). He gives four reasons for “the large reduction in the number of the proposed emendations to the MT” in his commentary compared with that of his predecessor (Macintosh 1997, lxxv–lxxvi). First, contemporary scholarship is more reluctant to resort to emendation because it is “arbitrary and subjective”; second, Hosea’s dialect and vocabulary cannot be treated as Standard Biblical Hebrew; third, the ancient Versions of Hosea give evidence of “being confronted with a Hebrew text which differed little from our received text”; and fourth, scholars have identified some early glosses in the text [made by

scribes in the South], which before being identified had led scholars to think that the text was corrupt in those instances.

The Hebrew text of Micah is also often viewed as damaged, and Hillers places it among the most corrupt books in the canon (Hillers 1984, 10; see also Collin 1971). There are especially difficult sections in chapters 1–2 and others in chapters 6–7 (Renaud 1977, xvi–xvii). Smith sees signs of corruption in a few places in the MT, but the kinds of things he lists as examples are minor, like changes in person, gender, and number to fit the context; missing necessary words; wrong vowel points; improper division of words; (p. 44) confusion of similar Hebrew consonants; and the omission of a word. He feels the text must be emended in 1:5, 12; 4:10; 5:6 (Heb. 5:5); 6:2, 9, and 14 (Smith 1984, 9). Renaud takes a conservative position concerning the MT text of Micah, emending it rarely because the consonantal text is so similar to recently discovered earlier texts like Mur 88 and the Pesher of Micah (Renaud 1977, XVI).

The Septuagint

Strictly speaking, the term “Septuagint” (LXX) refers to the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, as allegedly described as taking place in the third century BCE in the *Letter of Aristeas*. The term is often used generally to refer to the Greek Jewish Scriptures, consisting primarily of translations of the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible (McLay 2003, 6) but also containing additions to some of the books of the Hebrew Bible and some other independent works (see McLay 2003).[8] This more general use of the term LXX is much like people refer to the “English Bible,” without having a particular English translation in mind (Jobes and Silva 2015, 14). My use of the term LXX in this article, unless otherwise noted, is a general use of the term, referring to the Greek-Jewish Scriptures, consisting primarily of the books of the Hebrew Bible.[9]

The Septuagint is the most important ancient Version of the Hebrew Bible because it was the first complete translation and because its Hebrew source differed much from the other textual witnesses. This last fact accounts for its great importance in Hebrew textual studies (Tov 2012, 128).

The location of the Minor Prophets collection differs in Septuagint manuscripts. Sometimes the collection is at the beginning of the Prophets (in Vaticanus and Alexandinus), and in other manuscripts it follows the Major Prophets (in Sinaiticus). The order of the first six of the Minor Prophets in the LXX differs from the Hebrew in most catalogs and manuscripts. The dominant order in the LXX is Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah. Although some have questioned the unity of the translation of the Minor Prophets, the arguments that have been raised for more than one translator have not overthrown the consensus opinion that they should be attributed to a single translator (with the exception of Hab 3; see later) (see summary in Jones 1995, 88–90; see also Glenny 2016, 615–616). There is also no reason to doubt that the translation took place in Egypt (Glenny 2016, 617), about the middle of the second century BCE (Dines 2015, 441; Glenny 2016, 616–617). The Hebrew source of the translation of the Twelve was apparently very

close to the consonantal text of the MT (Dines 2015, 17, 308; Palmer 2004, 176; Glenny 2009, 146, 272; Joosten 1998, 64; Theocharous 2012, 9–11), and the translation itself is what Howard calls “typical translation Greek” (Howard 2007, 777), resulting in an adequate and a generally literal representation of the Hebrew.[10] The word order of the translation follows very closely the word order of its Hebrew source, and elements are seldom added or subtracted.[11] However, there are many exegetical and theological points of interest in the translation (Glenny 2009, 71–273; Dines 2015, 442–450).

(p. 45) An important early manuscript bearing witness to the LXX Minor Prophets is the Washington papyrus (W) from the third century CE, which is “fragmentary for Hosea and the beginning of Amos, and with many lacunae elsewhere but, despite revisions towards the Hebrew, an important pre-Hexaplaric witness” (Dines 2015, 438). Two important codices are complete for the Minor Prophets: Vaticanus (B, fourth century) and Alexandrinus (A, fifth century). Sinaiticus (S, fourth century) is lacking Hosea, Amos, and Micah (see Swete 1989, 125–131, 144–148, 165–168 and Ziegler 1967, 7–140 for more information on these and other manuscripts on the Minor Prophets). Tov calls B the best complete LXX manuscript (Tov 2012, 133).

The history of the Septuagint text is complex since there were many different translators involved, using different source texts, working over at least four hundred years, in Egypt and in Palestine. Each book and collection has its own story. Other issues that have complicated the history of the Septuagint text are the many revisions of the text, usually seeking to conform it to the Hebrew text,[12] and Origen’s Hexaplaric edition, which with its six columns contributed to much confusion in subsequent work on the text (see Würthwein 2014, 106–117; Tov 2012, 141–147; Brotzman and Tully 2016, 66–72).

The main critical edition of the Minor Prophets is in the Göttingen Septuagint edited by Joseph Ziegler (second edition 1967). An abridged critical edition is available in the popular Rahlfs Septuaginta (1935), based primarily on the uncials B, S, and A. The Minor Prophets are also available in the fourth volume of the diplomatic edition of Holmes and Parsons (1798–1827) and the third volume of the diplomatic edition of the Septuagint edited by Swete (reprint 1989), which generally follows the text of B. The most important English translation of the LXX is the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS; Pietersma and Wright 2007). Modern translations and commentaries provide auxiliary tools for the study of the LXX Minor Prophets.[13]

The prayer of Habakkuk (Hab 3) circulated as a psalm and exists in two different versions. The Barbareni text, which is found in a small group of manuscripts, is substantially different from the text in the majority of manuscripts and was likely an independent translation finished between 100 BCE and 100 CE (Harper 2013, 66–67, 23–24, 117). In the Göttingen Septuagint, Ziegler prints the entire Barbareni text of Hab 3 after his critical text.

The Targums

Targums are Aramaic translations of books or sections of the Hebrew Bible (see Flesher and Chilton 2011, 7–8, 36). Such translations became necessary in postexilic Judaism (fifth/fourth century BCE) when Aramaic became the official language of the western Persian empire and Jews in Palestine ceased speaking Hebrew as their common language (Neh 13:24). At this time and for centuries after, the Hebrew Scripture lessons that were read in the synagogue were accompanied with translations into Aramaic. Apparently, the translations were originally done orally, since it was forbidden to use a (p. 46) written targum in a synagogue worship service (m. Megillah 4:4, 6; see also 2:1), and it was only subsequently that written targums developed; it is not possible to establish a direct connection between the oral translations and the written texts. According to Jewish tradition, this process of giving an Aramaic oral translation of the Scripture readings can be traced back to Ezra (Neh 8:8; b. Megillah 74d). Thus, the practice of targumizing stands early in the history of the translation of the Hebrew Bible (Flesher and Chilton 2011, x).

The written targums date to the Rabbinic period (70 CE–1000 CE). There were two main schools in Judaism in the first millennium CE that were concerned with the Hebrew text and its transmission: a western school in Tiberias (Israel) and an eastern school in Babylon. Targums are classified as Palestinian or Babylonian according to which of these main Jewish schools produced them. There was apparently never an official (authoritative) targum from the western (Palestinian) school, but by the fifth century CE the eastern (Babylonian) school had produced official targums for the Pentateuch and the Prophets (early and latter), and not just for the portions of the Hebrew Bible read regularly as synagogue lections. Those two targums are Targum Onqelos (or Onkelos) on the Pentateuch and Targum Jonathan on the Prophets.[14] Targum Jonathan, which is our main focus of interest, contains both the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and the Latter Prophets (Major Prophets and Minor Prophets). Based primarily on linguistic evidence, Cathcart and Gordon concluded that the provenance of Targum Jonathan is Palestine, and that it was later redacted to some degree in Babylon (Cathcart and Gordon 1989, 12–14).[15] Based on their study of “the types and styles of interpretation utilized,” Flesher and Chilton find evidence of an early stage of development (70–135 CE) in “the incomplete exegetical frameworks of the Tannaim” found in the Zechariah Targum; they find evidence of a second exegetical framework (Amoraic) connected with a revision in the late third and fourth centuries CE in revisions in the Targum of Zechariah and in the Targums of Haggai and Malachi. They also posit two later “levels of exegetical interpretation” from the fifth century in the targums on the Minor Prophets: a further development of exilic theology in the fifth century in Hosea, Amos, Nahum, Obadiah, Micah, and Zephaniah, and a move of that theology in the direction of an individualistic exilic theology followed in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk (Cathcart and Gordon 1989, 226). There is evidence that this official targum, which reached its final form in Babylon, circulated in Palestine before the tenth century (Würthwein 2014, 135).

The Aramaic Targums are characterized by translation that is not strictly literal but often tending toward sermonizing. The translators exercise tremendous freedom in the way they render biblical texts. The targums are oriented toward the readers and "markedly stress the intent of biblical texts by paraphrasing, expanding with illustrations, modifying expressions about God that could be misunderstood, correcting passages that present difficulties, adapting the biblical texts to contemporary religious perspectives, and so on" (Würthwein 2014, 131).[16] In *The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Cathcart and Gordon summarize that "The chief aims of the Aramaic Targumist may be presented (p. 47) as the rendering of Scripture so as to be uniformly intelligible to the ordinary reader or hearer and at the same time to comport with current perceptions of what Scripture taught" (Cathcart and Gordon 1989, 1). They add that the targumists exhibit great ingenuity in pursuing these two aims. As to the extent of the freedom in rendering the Hebrew text, Targum Jonathan is one of the more free renderings, and Onqelos is "characteristically a relatively literal translation, almost consistently following the MT"; Targum Jonathan is "more given to paraphrase and midrashic expansion of the biblical text, often with interesting interpretations" (Würthwein 2014, 134–135).[17] Having said this, it should be emphasized that generally the targums represent the Masoretic text form (Cathcart and Gordon 1989, 1, 10–11; Wegner 1999, 203; Gelston 2010, 9).

The periphrastic nature of the targums lessens their value for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. It is worth consulting the targum when considering a textual problem or rendering of the Hebrew text (Wegner 1999, 202–224; Flesher and Chilton 2011, 23–27), but the textual critic should not unthinkingly link the Aramaic rendering with the Hebrew. The nature of the targums makes them more valuable for understanding Jewish interpretation of the texts than as witnesses to the Hebrew text (Wegner 1999, 202–204; Brotzman and Tully 2016, 72).

Sperber's editions of the official targums (Sperber 2004) are "the most accessible presentations of the texts of these [official] Targums" and serve as "the base text for the relevant volumes in *The Aramaic Bible* series" (Gordon 2004, 11). The primary text Sperber used for his edition of the Latter Prophets was Ms. Or. 2211 of the British Library (Gordon 2004, 7-12). Gordon concludes that "Sperber has represented the *consonantal* text with a fair degree of accuracy" in his editions, and "only very rarely is a reader of Sperber's text likely to be misled by a substantive error." However, Gordon's sample testing of Sperber's collation of secondary manuscripts indicates that Sperber's work in his critical apparatuses is not as trustworthy, and "variants are too often unreported or misreported" (Gordon 2004, 11). The volume in *The Aramaic Bible* series on *The Targum of the Minor Prophets* by Cathcart and Gordon includes a translation, critical introduction, apparatus, and notes, and it is generally considered to be the best resource available on this section of Targum Jonathan.

The Syriac Peshitta

Syriac is a dialect of Middle Aramaic that originated in the region of Edessa (today's Urfa in southeastern Turkey) and emerged about the first century BCE. The Peshitta (*BHQ*:S) is the name of the translation of the Old Testament into Syriac that was in circulation in the Syriac churches by the fourth and fifth centuries. While the Peshitta contains both testaments of the Christian Bible, Old and New Testaments, the focus here is on the Syriac version of the Old Testament.

(p. 48) The name Peshitta (meaning "common" or "simple") was given to this translation to distinguish it from others in Syriac, such as the Syro-Hexaplar (translation of the fifth column of Origen's Hexapla) and the Syriac revision by Jacob of Edessa in 633–708 (Würthwein 2014, 136). The Peshitta translation was not done by a single person, and the different styles of translation in the Minor Prophets suggest that there were several translators involved even in the rendering of this collection (Gelston 1987, 195). Most scholars think the Peshitta translation was completed in Edessa in the second century CE (Van der Kooij 2016, 635–636),[18] but Gelston thinks that the translation of the Minor Prophets was earlier than that, "in the middle or late first century" (Gelston 1987, 195). All acknowledge that the milieu of the translators of the Peshitta was Jewish, but there is debate whether there was also Christian influence. Indications of occasional reliance on the LXX in the translation process suggest to some that the translators might have been Jews who converted to Christianity, but Gelston does not find evidence for such a Christian influence on the translators of the Minor Prophets (Gelston 1987, 195), and he thinks references to the LXX in the Twelve are more likely an indication the translators had a limited knowledge of Hebrew and perhaps of the text of the Minor Prophets (Gelston 1987, 177).[19]

"The translators…wrote for Syriac speakers, whose main desire was to be able to access the Hebrew Old Testament in their own tongue" (Kiraz et al. 2012, XIII). Their translation is faithful and accurate, but it is not stilted or slavishly literal (Gelston 1987, 195). It is more a literal translation than a paraphrase, and in this regard it is closer in its style to the LXX than to the Targum. The text they used was a proto-MT type text, with only a few exceptions (Van der Kooij 2016, 630–631) that was "closely similar to MT, though the word-division occasionally and the vocalization [of the Hebrew] more often differed from that of the later Masoretic tradition" Gelston 1987, 191). As a witness to the proto-MT, the text current in the second century CE, the Peshitta has "little distinctive contribution to offer to the reconstruction of a putative original Hebrew text" (Gelston 1987, 130); its greatest value is in the promise it offers for the study of early Jewish exegetical traditions (Gelston 1987, 191).

Codex Ambrosianus (S^{7a1}) is an extremely important Syriac Peshitta manuscript dating from the sixth–seventh centuries CE, which contains the complete Old Testament. It is located in Milan, Italy, in the Ambrosian Library, and it serves as the base text for the important Leiden edition: *Vetus Testamentum Syriace*, the first volume of which appeared in 1972 and the Minor Prophets were published in 1980 (Gelston 1980).[20] The text of this

edition was prepared according to the rules of the Leiden Peshitta Institute, and thus the text of Codex Ambrosianus (S^{7a1}) is "printed except where it was clearly erroneous or lacked the support of at least two of the older Mss." (Gelston 1980, xvi). However, Van der Kooij notes that this manuscript "cannot be regarded as representing the original text of the Syriac version in every detail," and he mentions S^{9a1} as being an important manuscript for that matter, although it has only Hos 1:1–14:6 in the Minor Prophets (Van der Kooij 2016, 630–631). The Introduction to the volume of the Leiden edition: *Vetus Testamentum Syriace* on the Minor Prophets contains descriptions of the Syriac Peshitta biblical manuscripts up to the twelfth century, and Gelston gives a (p. 49) description of the later manuscripts in chapter one of *The Peshitta of the Twelve Prophets*, which aims to make available the data which emerged from his collation and evaluation of the Minor Prophets manuscripts for *Vetus Testamentum Syriace*.

Another important Peshitta resource is *The Syriac Peshitta Bible with English Translation*. The text in the volume on the Minor Prophets, which was published in Kiraz et al. (2012), contains a "West Syriac version [West Syrian vowel structure] of the 1887–91 Peshitta Mosul text" with an English translation (Kiraz 2012, vii).[21] Although the Mosul text was based on second millennium manuscripts, its text is substantially attested by manuscripts from the first millennium, as the editors of this volume determined by comparison with the critical apparatus of the Leiden edition. Thus, the consonantal text of this edition is ancient; however, the vocalization and orthographic markings are from a later time, since Syriac biblical manuscripts prior to the sixth century are rarely vocalized (Kiraz 2012, vii–ix). The editors of this new English translation follow the Syriac text as closely as possible in their translation in order to facilitate a "word-by-word comparison" between the two texts that could be used by readers who are not completely fluent in Syriac and want to use the translation to help them read and follow the Syriac text.

The Vulgate

As Roman power expanded over the Mediterranean world around the turn of the era, it was only natural that the Latin language would also have more and more influence. No one knows for sure who first translated the Old Testament into Latin, but the earliest witnesses to these translations are primarily fragments translated from the LXX by Christians and circulating before the time of Jerome. These fragments, which include practically all the Latin biblical texts not classified as Vulgate texts, are grouped under the term *Vetus Latina* (*BHQ*: La) or Old Latin. The preserved texts for the Minor Prophets include Hos 1:12–4:8; Hos 10:5–11:9; Joel 2:3–25; and Amos 1:11–3:2. None of these texts contains independent variants of text-critical significance.[22]

The most important Latin witness to the Old Testament text is the Vulgate (meaning "the common one"; *BHQ*: V), which was translated from the Hebrew Old Testament by Jerome (Hieronymus) between 390 and 405 CE. After Jerome's return to Rome in 382 CE, Pope Damasus assigned him the task of revising the Latin Bible, apparently so one Latin version could be authoritative, and Jerome began this work in 383 CE with his translation of

the Gospels. He then moved to the Psalms and completed the *Psalterium Gallicanum*, which was more a revision of the existing Latin Psalms texts corrected by comparison with the LXX; this version of the Psalms was included in the Vulgate beginning in the ninth century, and Jerome's Hebrew-based translation was removed.

After employing the LXX as the basis of his translation of the Psalms, Jerome became convinced that in order to have one consistently accurate translation of the Old Testament he needed to replace the Church's "divinely inspired LXX" with the *veritas* (p. 50) *hebriaca* (Würthwein 2014, 142–143). This was the basis of his famous controversy with Augustine, who did not know Hebrew and preferred a translation based on the Greek text that was esteemed and used throughout the churches (see Müller 1996, 83–97).

After his conversion to Christianity as a young man, Jerome studied Hebrew off and on, and when he moved to Bethlehem in 388, he continued that study and consulted with Jewish scholars in his work.[23] The translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin, which he worked on from 390 to 405, is one of his greatest works and is unique among ancient translations of Scripture in being the work of one man. He finished his translation of the Latter Prophets in 391–393.

Jerome's Vulgate translation could be described as generally close to his Hebrew sources, although the approach varies between books. At times Jerome follows the language of the Old Latin translation, apparently not wanting to disrupt church tradition. Graves summarizes that his rendering of the "Latter Prophets is a generally free translation of the Hebrew into idiomatic Latin" (Graves 2016, 646–649).

The text of the Vulgate is close to the Masoretic Text (Tov 2012, 153; Tov 2011, 173–185; Graves 2016, 649), and the *lemmata* (Latin translations) in Jerome's commentaries match the Vulgate in most places. Tov notes, however, that Jerome's commentaries and Vulgate translation demonstrate that he did not base his work exclusively on Masoretic-type texts but was also influenced by the exegesis of the LXX, Symmachus, Aquila, and *kaige*-Theodotian (in that order) (Tov 2012, 153). He also emphasizes the importance of the Vulgate for the history of exegesis, especially when read in comparison with Jerome's commentaries on the Minor Prophets, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Sometimes in the commentaries Jerome explains his translation choices, which can enlighten our understanding of his Vulgate renderings (Graves 2016, 645).

Jerome's commentaries are difficult to date precisely, but Graves dates those on the Minor Prophets between the early 390s and the early 400s, meaning some were completed possibly ten years after the Vulgate translation of the texts (Graves 2016, 645n5). Where the translation of the Vulgate differs from the rendering in the commentary, Jerome apparently used slightly different texts or perhaps changed his renderings based on his growing understanding of Hebrew or new perspectives on the text. Because the translation and commentaries are separate works, the commentaries should not be used to establish the text of the translation. The importance of the Vulgate as a witness to the Hebrew text also is diminished by the interference of the Old Latin and the Septuagint over long periods and by the already highly standardized MT-type text that would have been its

source by the time Jerome translated it, meaning it would have contained few textual variants (Brotzman and Tully 2016, 87–88).

An important medieval Vulgate manuscript is Codex Amiatinus, which dates between 690 and 715 and is from England; it is based on different Vulgate manuscripts of varying quality (see Würthwein 2014, 144). The most comprehensive critical edition of the Vulgate, designed as an *editio critica maior*, is the *Biblia Sacra iuxta latinam Vulgatam versionem* edited by the Pontifical Abbey of St. Jerome-in-the-City (1926–), of which eighteen volumes have so far been published. An *editio minor* version of this *Biblia Sacra* was published in 1969 and is now available in one volume (Weber and Gryson 2007).[24]

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Notes:

([1.]) This text is available on line (http://www.aleppocodex.org).

([2.]) See 4QXII^{e} and 4QXII^{c}; these two manuscripts evidence textual diversity, but the proto-Masoretic text tradition became the “sole textual exemplar in the Minor Prophets” within a about a century and a half (Fuller 2016).

([3.]) There is also other introductory material with information on things like symbols and abbreviations, definitions of terms used to characterize readings, a glossary of common terms in the Masorah, and tables of accents. Fuller comments, “The *BHQ* edition of the Minor Prophets by Gelston is not comprehensive but represents a significant improvement over earlier editions of the *BH* series” (2016, 607). Barthélemy (1992) has also written a commentary on the text of the MT Minor Prophets, but it is not exhaustive.

([4.]) See Tov (2012, 45). Also, Brotzman and Tully, who add that “because each Masorah must refer to its own text, L is thus internally inconsistent” (2016, 58).

([5.]) Fresch (2016, 590); Nogalski (2011, 5–8). See, for example, the discussion concerning Amos in Carroll (2002, 31–35).

([6.]) Fresch (2016, 590–98) summarizes important aspects of the textual history of all twelve books in the Minor Prophets collection.

([7.]) See the discussion in Macintosh (1997, liii–lxi and lxxiv–lxxvi) and Harper (1905, clxxiii–clxxviii). See also Stuart (1987, 13), who employs the LXX, the text preserved in the Qumran scrolls, and other versions to establish the text of Hosea.

([8.]) Some of these additions and other works that are included in the LXX were translations from Hebrew or Aramaic, while other books [independent works] were originally composed in Greek [like the Wisdom of Solomon]. The issue of the meaning of the term “Septuagint” is further complicated by the facts that it was translated from Hebrew over

several centuries, and the translations began to be revised shortly after they were completed.

([9.]) McLay explains that “A terminological difficulty is encountered when nonspecialists employ a reading from printed editions of the LXX (Rahlfs or Brooke-McLean) or a manuscript and refer to it as *the reading of the Septuagint* as though it represents the oldest recoverable form of that book. In such cases the text that is being used may represent a LXX reading, that is, it is part of the scriptural tradition that originated in the Greek Jewish community, but it does not necessarily represent the original reading for that book that can be critically reconstructed using textual criticism” (2003, 6). As a point of clarification, most specialists use the term Old Greek (OG) to designate a (critical) text that in their judgment represents the original translation of books other than the Pentateuch (see McLay 2003, 6), and some use the abbreviation LXX/OG, when referring to the initial translations of the Hebrew Bible as a whole, as a reminder of the diversity that characterizes the corpus (Jobes and Silva 2015, 16).

([10.]) Dines (2015, 2, 307–308); Glenny (2009, 272); Joosten (1998, 82–85). Palmer says concerning the translation of LXX Zechariah, “Interpretive freedom takes place within the context of literalism” (2004, 39); this is also what Glenny (2009, 268) finds in LXX-Amos.

([11.]) Glenny (2009, 13); Palmer (2004, 36–37); Theocharous (2012, 9–11). Dines (2015, 138–39) finds only four places in LXX-Amos where the word order differs from the Hebrew (5:14, 26; 7:7, 12).

([12.]) The *kaige*-Theodotian revision is in the direction of the proto-masoretic text. Later revisions in the second century CE (those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian, which were included in Origen’s Hexapla) had various purposes. The most important revision after the Hexapla was that identified with Lucian of Antioch.

([13.]) Bons, Joosten, and Kessler (2002); Harl et al. (1999); Cassevitz, Dogniez, and Harl (2007); Vianès (2011); Glenny (2013a, 2013b); Howard (2007, 775–22); Utzschneider (2009, 1165–1229); and Schart et al. (2011, 2275–2483).

([14.]) The connection of this Targum with Jonathan is based on b. Meg. 3a, where the Targum is associated with Jonathan ben Uzziel (Cathcart and Gordon 1989, 1).

([15.]) They see evidence that the main composition or editing in Palestine was done after 70 CE (16–18), but they are not sure that this activity “can be accommodated within the period A.D. 70–135” (Cathcart and Gordon 1989, 18n70). According to McNamara (1972, 208), there was a no-longer-extant Palestinian targum from which the rendering of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets was derived; this targum probably continued to exist in Palestine for some time and would have been needed for the rendering of passages from the Prophets read in the synagogues of Palestine. Some citations from this targum are found in rabbinic works.

([16.]) See the characterization of the way the targums translate the Hebrew in Sysling (2007, 279–305); for specific examples from the Prophets, see Lier (2016, 625–629).

([17.]) See further Cathcart and Gordon (1989, 1–9) and Flescher and Chilton (2011, 11–16). See, for example, the “substantial interpretive expansion” in Hos 5:8 (Gelston 2010, 9).

([18.]) The latest and best reference work on the Syriac Old Testament is Weitzman (1999); see his discussion of the place and date of the Peshitta translation on 247–258.

([19.]) Although in the rendering of the Pentateuch the Peshitta translation of the Hebrew is closely related to the Targum tradition, in the Minor Prophets its rendering of the Hebrew is more closely related to the LXX (see also Würthwein 2014, 137–138).

([20.]) A morphologically tagged transcription of S^{7a1} is available from Accordance Bible Software.

([21.]) The Mosul text can be found in David (2010), a reprint of the Mosul 1887–1891 edition.

([22.]) See Barrera (2016, 664) for further comments on the importance of these passages. These fragments have been published by Frede (1996, 81–97). For summaries of the other daughter versions, based on the LXX (Coptic, Ethiopic, Late Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Old Church Slavonic, and Arabic), see Lange and Tov (2016, 660–730).

([23.]) See Graves (2007). He comments concerning Jerome’s knowledge of Hebrew: "In his discussion he gives clear evidence of having consulted the Hebrew himself, providing details about the Hebrew that could not have been learned from the Greek translations" (Graves 2007, 197).

([24.]) Tov (2012, 153n262) notes that while the major edition contains many variants, the editors do not always show judicious insight, often preferring readings on account of their similarity to the MT or LXX. He notes concerning the minor edition that although it contains fewer data, it comprises a better text.

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The Minor Prophets in the Judean Desert Manuscripts

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Abstract and Keywords

The Judean Desert manuscripts are the earliest extant witnesses for the prophetic compositions that are part of the Book of the Twelve. This essay offers an assessment of the original extent of these manuscripts in light of material aspects and scribal practices as well as a brief discussion of their importance for the textual history of the Minor Prophets. It is argued that some of the manuscripts contained only individual compositions, whereas others represent collections of different sizes. The manuscript witnesses and the use of these prophetic compositions in other writings further demonstrate that they were perceived both as individual compositions and as distinct collections. This conclusion has consequences for evaluating the textual history and textual affiliation of the individual books and the Book of the Twelve as a collection that should be taken into account in future studies.

Keywords: Keywords: Judean Desert manuscripts, Minor Prophets, Minor Prophets manuscripts, scribal practices, textual history, textual affiliation, Qumran, Dead Sea Scrolls

(p. 57) THE Dead Sea Scrolls have provided important ancient manuscript evidence from the centuries around the turn of the era for the prophetic books now found in the Book of the Twelve. With the exception of two manuscripts deriving from Murabbaʿat (MurXII) and Qumran Cave 5 (5QAmos) published early on (Milik 1961, 1962), the manuscripts were all published fairly recently, in the 1990s (Tov 1990; Fuller 1997). For this reason, depending on the manuscript, a fair amount of detailed work still remains to be done which will in turn probably affect the use of these manuscripts in broader studies. This is especially true since the recent publication of new high-resolution and multispectrum images of most of these manuscripts in the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library (https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/). This not only allows for easy general access to this material but also, in conjunction with the earlier PAM photos, for a more comprehensive assessment of particularly damaged fragments and their readings.

The continuation of detailed work on the individual manuscripts is also essential because the scholarly discussion has from the very beginning been profoundly influenced by the concept of the Twelve and the extant collections of them, especially in the MT and LXX. Most scholars have tended to approach these manuscripts with two interrelated research questions, either explicitly or as a natural starting point of their investigation. The first is whether the Judean Desert manuscripts of the Minor Prophets *could* all have contained the twelve books known from the MT and LXX, and the second is the relevance of their preserved textual variants and overall textual affiliation for the textual history of the Book of the Twelve.

The first question is of course pertinent in view of the continuing debate about whether the Twelve is a unified book or a looser collection of individual compositions (e.g., Di Pede and Scaiola 2016).It was only natural that this was the first question scholars sought to answer when all the Judean Desert manuscripts of the Minor Prophets had (p. 58) been published (e.g., Fuller 1996; García Martínez 2004; Brooke 2006). The second question was related to the overall process of cataloging and categorizing the variant readings in the "biblical" manuscripts from the Judean Desert sites made possible by the opening of the Qumran manuscripts to the broader scholarly community in the 1990s and the official publication of the last "biblical" manuscripts from these sites during the early 2000s. Most of the categorizing, including the manuscripts of the Minor Prophets, was done with the categories established by Emanuel Tov (2008) that delineated the manuscripts in accordance with the relative closeness of their text to the known major textual representatives, like the MT and LXX. The resulting categorization of the manuscripts of the Minor Prophets differed from scholar to scholar (cf. Fuller 1997, 2016; García Martínez 2004; Tov 2004, 2008; Brooke 2006; Lange 2009), which led to the questioning of the usefulness of the criteria for the different categories (e.g., von Weissenberg 2012b).

Both of these areas of investigation have emerged from the broader study of the Hebrew Bible, and the Twelve in particular. They have provided an essential starting point for future investigations and allowed for the Minor Prophets manuscripts to be used as part of topical discussions in biblical studies. Several preconceptions tied in with these broader investigations, however, have influenced the ways in which the Judean Desert manuscripts have been analyzed. Recent studies have shown how deeply ingrained and influential the concept of the later Hebrew Bible and its study in the last centuries on the way scholars approach material related to works in this compilation (e.g., Mroczek 2016). In the following, some of these preconceptions related to the Minor Prophets will be questioned and several future approaches will be suggested for both of the main areas of interest regarding these texts. First the Judean Desert manuscript evidence for the Minor Prophets will be presented along with a discussion concerning their perception as a unified composition or a collection by the ancient scribes and scholars responsible for these manuscripts. After this, questions concerning the importance of these manuscripts for understanding the textual history of the Minor Prophets will be treated briefly.

Unified Composition or a Collection?

The idea that the Minor Prophets would make up a unified book or collection that ideally contained exactly twelve prophetic works has been an underlying assumption in most scholarship on the Judean Desert manuscripts with significant material from the Minor Prophets. It can be seen in such statements as Russell Fuller's (1996) tentative suggestion that all the Cave 4 manuscripts of the Minor Prophets from Qumran "seem to have been complete scrolls of the Minor Prophets," or in Jesper Høgenhaven's statement that "the surviving manuscripts seem to document that the Book of the Twelve was treated in the Qumran library as a coherent 'book' or a well-established collection" (2013, 113). Most of the scholarly discussion on these manuscripts has in fact placed an (p. 59) emphasis on whether the different individual manuscripts could have contained all twelve books now in the Book of the Twelve (see, e.g., Fuller 1996; García Martínez 2004, 111–112; Brooke 2006, 20–34). It is natural that previously known texts and questions posed to them influence the way new material is approached, either consciously or in a more implicit manner, but without such prior evidence and assumptions none of the Judean Desert manuscripts of Minor Prophets would have been classified as containing twelve prophetic works.

What the often scant remains of these manuscripts *do* show is that sometimes these compositions were copied as individual works and interpreted as such, whereas on other occasions they were combined in collections of different sizes. The scope of these collections is presently hard to estimate, except for the individual books that have been partly preserved in them. Current methods of material reconstruction and digital advances in manuscript studies should allow for better estimates of the original scope of at least a few of the manuscripts, but it is clear from the current evidence that in the Qumran manuscripts the Minor Prophets were treated similarly to other collections of compositions. Perhaps the most directly comparable collections are those of the psalms. The over forty manuscripts containing psalms now in the MT Psalter vary in the size of the collections, their content, and sequence of material. They do not provide unified evidence for a particular larger Book of Psalms but rather for the overall esteem placed on psalm literature and the varied functions they had in late Second Temple Jewish communities (e.g., Mroczek 2016; Pajunen 2018). Other collections or anthologies, like the compositions now forming 1 Enoch, are treated in a similar way in the Qumran manuscripts.

These manuscripts do not rule out the existence of a MT-type 150-Psalm Psalter at the time they were copied or that such a collection would not have been intentionally compiled. The same caution holds for a collection of exactly twelve Minor Prophets. The manuscripts only demonstrate that there was no universally accepted ideal form for these collections before the (late) first century CE and that the individual psalms and prophetic works were also valued as compositions in their own right and not simply as parts of particular collections. What is significant for the Minor Prophets is that their collections apparently did not contain other works. In the early scholarly sorting of the fragments, any "nonbiblical" fragments would not have been connected with a manuscript with material from a "biblical" book unless there was an explicit reason to do so, as was the case with

several of the psalms manuscripts (e.g., 4QPs^{f}, 11QPs^{a}, 11QapocrPs). It is thus theoretically possible that other material might have been sometimes mixed in with the Minor Prophets, but currently there is no reason to suspect this. These compositions were apparently perceived to have some sort of elemental connection with each other in addition to being valued as individual compositions. This connection is also shown by examples presented by George Brooke (2006, 37–40) in which several books of the Minor Prophets are used together in scriptural exegesis.

Because the Minor Prophets at Qumran were treated as both individual compositions and as works drawn together into collections, the following discussion presents the manuscripts in accordance with what the preserved material can reveal about both (p. 60) aspects of the materials. In most cases, the exact extent of the manuscripts, and hence how many individual books of the Minor Prophets they might originally have contained, cannot be estimated because so little remains. When the height and width of columns in a manuscript can be estimated, it can be used together with scribal features such as script type, letter size, spacing of words and lines, and extant contents to give an estimate of whether the manuscript probably contained just an individual book, a limited collection of a few books, or a larger collection. In most of these manuscripts, the order of the books is not positively attested so that the sequence of the fragments in the DJD edition relies more on the MT order of the Minor Prophets than on the extant material features. In some cases, at least a partial material reconstruction of a manuscript seems possible and might then either confirm or challenge such an order, but this will require careful future studies on individual manuscripts, as noted in the discussion to follow. Another future avenue to be investigated is why certain books of the Minor Prophets were brought together in more limited collections than the ones known from the MT and LXX and, in the case of 4Q76, also in a different sequence. Were such collections made because of thematic or theological connections between specific individual books or similar literary settings, or were they meant to be used together in interpretive works?

Before presenting the individual manuscripts, two general observations should be made. First, with the exception of a Greek manuscript from Naḥal Ḥever (8ḤevXIIgr), all the manuscripts are in Hebrew; and second, all of the manuscripts are on leather rather than papyrus. In addition to an overall presentation of the manuscripts, scholarly classifications of their textual affiliation are given in cases where enough material for such a judgment has been preserved.

Fragments of Individual Books

Manuscript 4Q78 fragment 35 does not belong to manuscript 4Q78, otherwise discussed later. This determination is based on a marked difference in length and spacing of lines in comparison with other preserved portions of 4Q78 (Fuller 1997, 251).The fragment possibly contains text from Mal 3:6–7, although the identification rests on one complete word (*shemartem*, “kept them”), and the scant remains attest to two variants to known textual traditions. It might thus be prudent not to take this fragment as evidence of a copy of

Malachi, a *pesher* of Malachi, or another manuscript of the Twelve, but rather as an unidentified fragment.

Manuscript 4Q79 consists of two joined fragments from Hos 1:6–2:5. An extant handle sheet to the right of the preserved text shows that the manuscript began with Hosea, which may have prompted Brooke (2006, 23) to suggest that the manuscript most likely had all of the Twelve. Several scribal and material features make it much more probable that 4Q79 is rather a personal copy and most likely contained just Hosea (cf. García Martínez 2004, 109). The first of these features is the script, which is, as Fuller (1997, 253) observes, a vulgar semi-cursive. The height and width of the letters vary a great (p. 61) deal, and the scribe exhibits no inclination to follow the horizontal ruling, observable at least for some lines. This means a great deal of space has been wasted and neither the script nor spacing accords with the care observable in the preparation and writing of other Minor Prophets manuscripts, preserving evidence for more than one book. The irregularity of the script also hinders the estimation of the width and height of the column, and reconstructing the partial lines according to the MT would mean the number of letter spaces varied from thirty-one to fifty-five corrected letter spaces (Fuller 1997, 253). Obviously, it is quite possible that there are some variants to the MT in the lacunae, but all this carelessness and irregularity exhibited by the scribe as well as the use of the inelegant script make it most likely that 4Q79 originally only contained a personal copy of Hosea.

Manuscript 4Q81 consists of four fragments with text from Jonah 1:6–8, 10–16. Based on his placement of these fragments in two successive columns, Fuller (1997, 269) argues that the manuscript would have contained parts of another book before Jonah in the first column. His estimate of minimum column height is dependent on whether one places fragment 4 in the same column with fragments 2 and 3 or at the beginning of the next, third, column. With the current placement, there would have to be a minimum of thirteen lines per column, and the first would probably contain text from another book before the beginning of Jonah. The alternative placement of fragment 4 at the beginning of a third column would mean the manuscript had only 10–11 lines per column and could have begun with Jon 1:1 at the top of the first column. In this scenario, the manuscript likely only contained the book of Jonah, as suggested by Florentino García Martínez (2004, 110). Both arrangements are materially possible, but in such cases it is better to err on the side of caution and conclude that in its current state of preservation the manuscript attests only to the book of Jonah.

Manuscript 4Q81 fragment 5 was earlier edited by Fuller (1993) as a separate fragment but was included with manuscript 4Q81 in the official edition (Fuller 1997, 267). The change was based on his estimation that the script has most similarities with that manuscript of the Cave 4 Minor Prophets manuscripts, but he fully acknowledges that an actual identification with this manuscript is impossible with the remaining ten letters on the fragment (Fuller 1997, 270). There is no compelling reason to include the fragment as part of 4Q81, and it is better to treat it as a fragment from another manuscript (García Martínez 2004, 110). With only two complete, rather common, words (*lo* and *laken*) and

the fact that there would be a significant variant reading within these ten letters (the fully preserved *lo* as an otherwise unattested addition after *li* in Mic 5:2; Heb. 5:1), it is not at all certain that this fragment should be considered as attesting Mic 5:2–3 (Heb. 5:1–2).

Manuscript 4Q168 does seem to contain text from Mic 4:8–12, but scholars currently disagree on whether the small remaining fragments derive from a *pesher* of Micah or a copy of the actual book. Manuscript 5Q4 contains parts of Amos 1:2–5. It is too small to reveal anything about the arrangement of the scroll and its extent. Brooke has suggested that because the preserved portion is from the beginning of Amos, this might have been the only book that the manuscript originally contained (2006, 25); this is certainly true in terms of its present state of preservation.

(p. 62) The final possible manuscripts preserving portions of individual books of the Minor Prophets are likewise only conserved on very small fragments that are part of private collections and published only recently. While their sellers claim that they originate from Judean Desert sites, the provenance of all of these fragments is currently unknown, and there have been some questions concerning their authenticity as well. The Schøyen Collection MS 4612/1 contains portions of Joel 4:1–5 (Elgvin et al. 2016, 223–232); the Lanier Theological Library DSS F.Amos1 contains parts of Amos 7:17–8:1 (Tov 2014); and Museum of the Bible MOTB.Scr.003171 and MOTB.Scr.003183 contain words from Jon 4:2–5 and Mic 1:4–6, respectively (Tov et al. 2016, 168–189). Careful study has already shown that the last two, the Museum of the Bible manuscripts, are quite certainly modern forgeries (Davis 2017).

Limited Collections

The oldest known manuscript of the Minor Prophets is 4Q76, paleographically dated to the middle of the second century BCE, thus predating habitation at Khirbet Qumran (Brooke 2006, 21). 4Q76 preserves parts of Malachi and Jonah and scant remains of a third composition that remains unidentified. Fuller identifies the remains of letters in fragment 1 as Zech 14:18 (1997, 223), but the points of connection are tenuous and some of the readings are problematic (Pajunen and von Weissenberg 2015, 737–738).

The manuscript is otherwise best known for the previously unattested Malachi–Jonah sequence suggested by Fuller (1997, 202). The reconstructed sequence was challenged early on (e.g., García Martínez 2004, 107; Guillaume 2007) and unless significant anomalies in scroll production and unattested textual variants are postulated, the sequence has been shown all but impossible to maintain (Pajunen and von Weissenberg 2015). The material remains suggest instead that Jonah did not follow immediately after Malachi, but another composition came between them. That intervening composition probably spanned five columns, making it about the same length as Malachi and Jonah. Material evidence indicates that Jonah was the last composition on the scroll, whereas Malachi was either the first or was preceded by another short composition. The limited size of the collection is also suggested by the fact that Malachi and Jonah alone fill eleven columns and measure ca. 1.5 m in length, even though the scroll itself is not high and has eigh-

teen to twenty lines written with a rather large semi-cursive hand. Moreover, 4Q76 has by far the narrowest attested column width among these manuscripts, and it is also among those with the fewest lines per column, making it the smallest and hence quite probably also the shortest of the manuscripts, attesting to more than one book of the Minor Prophets (see further Pajunen and von Weissenberg 2015). Largely because of the sequence of the books, 4Q76 is consistently textually classified as “nonaligned” (Fuller 1997, 221; García Martínez 2004, 106; Brooke 2006, 21; Tov 2008, 156; Lange 2009, 336).

4Q77 is paleographically dated to the early Hasmonean period (c. 150–125 BCE) and thus also brought to Qumran from outside (Brooke 2006, 22). Only six fragments containing (p. 63) parts of Zephaniah and Haggai have been preserved, with the transition from Zephaniah to Haggai extant on fragment 3. Little can be said with any confidence about the original size of the collection of Minor Prophets in this manuscript. In theory it is possible that it contained a large collection, such as the ones discussed later (Brooke 2006, 33), but the width of the columns suggests it could rather have been a more limited compilation. If reconstructed roughly according to the MT, about 40 corrected letter spaces per column are needed for all the partly preserved columns; a number similar to those needed for 4Q76 but significantly less than 4Q78 and 4Q80 which have on average 55–75 corrected letter spaces per column. Unfortunately, the column height of 4Q77 cannot be estimated, without which no conclusive decisions can be made about the general size of the scroll or the writing block employed by the scribe.

4Q80 is written in a late Hasmonean (ca. 75–50 BCE) semiformal hand (Fuller 1997, 258). The manuscript consists of 25 small fragments. The script is small, but with a regular spacing of letters and words. The division of dry lines (scoring marks) is also rather minimal, ranging from 0.3 cm to 0.4 cm. This means that the scribe fitted a great amount of text into a relatively small space. It shows that this is definitely not a spacious large-sized deluxe manuscript, but it does not reveal how much material the scribe intended to write or the length of the scroll. The reconstructed width of the columns is on average c. 56–59 corrected letter spaces (Fuller 1997, 257), but the fragments are too small to allow for the height of the columns to be established. The identified fragments preserve parts of Haggai and Zechariah but without positive evidence for their order. Nothing therefore really indicates how much material this scroll originally held. It could have been a large compilation that was fitted on a rather small amount of leather by the scribe, or it might have been a smaller collection of just a few books. There is a scribal feature evident on this scroll that, together with similar features in 4Q82, deserves closer scrutiny in the future: the division of the text into smaller sense units. There are at least partial empty lines acting as section breaks attested, for example, between Zech 2:11–12; 3:10–4:1; 5:8–9; and 12:10–11. These divisions might give some indication of the purpose of this collection and hence partial clues about its original extent. The manuscript has been textually classified either as “nonaligned” (Brooke 2006, 24; Tov 2008, 156) or as mostly proto-Masoretic (García Martínez 2004, 109; Lange 2009, 339).

Larger Collections

4Q78 is paleographically dated to ca. 75 BCE (Fuller 1997, 238). The manuscript consists of slightly over fifty fragments. Because the fragments are typically small and the scribe evidently also used *vacat*s (empty spaces) as sense divisions within the individual compositions and not just between them, it is very difficult to judge the width or height of the columns. Fuller estimates the number of corrected letter spaces needed for the partly extant columns to vary between 60 and 80 letters depending on the column (1997, 238). The manuscript contains fragments from Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah, and because of the width of the columns it might conceivably have originally contained (p. 64) material from other Minor Prophets as well. Whether the compositions numbered twelve or less cannot be determined with the little that remains. Likewise, the order of the books cannot be positively verified because no divisions between books are extant and the fragments are much too small to allow for a material reconstruction that might clarify the sequence. The fact that the only identified fragments are from Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah might indicate that the order of the books in 4Q78 was different from the MT or LXX, or that 4Q78 contained only some of the Minor Prophets. It might be pure happenstance that nothing is preserved of the five books between Amos and Zephaniah in the MT arrangement, but it is peculiar and raises questions that the preserved material cannot answer. If the new multispectrum images allow for some of the still unidentified fragments to be positively identified, this might also allow for a better determination of whether more Minor Prophets are represented in the smallest fragments. When a textual classification for this manuscript is given, it has been regarded as “nonaligned” (García Martínez 2004, 108; Tov 2008, 156; Lange 2009, 338).

4Q82 has been paleographically dated to the late Hasmonean or early Herodian period (Fuller 1997, 272). There are 258 small fragments in this manuscript and thus far identified fragments contain passages from Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, possibly Habakkuk, and Zechariah. Of the Qumran Minor Prophets manuscripts, 4Q82 preserves parts of the greatest number of individual books, but its material also poses the greatest challenges. Fuller particularly notes the difficulties related to many of the fragments being layered (due to the rolling of the scroll): it is hard to decipher which revolution of skin specific letters belong to, and the ink on some of these fragments has formed mirror images on the underside of the preceding layer (1997, 271). He further observes that the writing on most of the fragments is illegible to the unaided eye.

While these factors make any work on this manuscript a challenge, current imaging tools and computer software should make it possible to do much more with this manuscript than was possible over twenty years ago. Such examination could allow for further readings to be gathered from the lower layers of the layered fragments, make it possible to estimate the column widths and heights more conclusively, establish the direction the scroll was rolled, and hopefully even give a firmer indication of the sequence of at least some of the books on this scroll.

Regardless of future work, it is already apparent that this was a significant collection of the Minor Prophets, with at least eight or nine books evident in its current state of preservation and the transition from Amos to Obadiah extant on fragment 71. Given that the scribe's spacing of words is at times rather minimal and sometimes he did not leave any space between words, he probably had much material in relation to the available writing surface. As with 4Q78, 4Q80 also contains sense divisions within the individual books, indicated by *vacat*s. Sometimes these coincide with the current chapter divisions (e.g., between Hos 3 and 4; 9 and 10; Amos 2 and 3; 7 and 8; 8 and 9), but at other times they seem to reflect a different logic (e.g., between Joel 2:8 and 2:9; Amos 5:10 and 5:11; Jonah 1:5 and 1:6; 2:10 and 2:11; 4:6 and 4:7). While at times the reason for a *vacat* is obvious, like after the ending of Jonah's prayer in 2:10, in other cases, as between (p. 65) Jonah 1:5 and 6, they are more perplexing. The textual classification of 4Q82 differs, with Fuller (1997, 272), García Martínez (2004, 111), and Lange (2009, 341) pointing out its relative closeness to the MT, while Brooke (2006, 25) and Tov (2008, 156) categorize it as "nonaligned."

8ḤevXIIgr has been variously dated by scholars through paleography, with dates ranging from ca. 50 BCE to a more general dating to the first century CE (see Tov 1990, 19–26). This is a beautiful manuscript with an elegant Greek script, very large margins, and 33 to 42 lines per column. It contains fragmentary parts of all the Minor Prophets from Jonah to Zechariah, except for Haggai. The most important unresolved question concerning this manuscript is whether its different parts, A and B, come from one or two manuscripts. Two scribal hands are evident, and there are also other differences between the two parts —related to the skin, the number of lines in a column, and the connecting of the sheets (see further, Tov 1990, 14–19; García Martínez 2004, 105). Current technology would allow for the fragments of this scroll to be rolled virtually, which would demonstrate whether the sequence of the books is secure throughout and whether there are discrepancies in the rolling related to the two parts of the manuscript. Currently available images from the verso of the skin could further aid in this analysis. Some of these images, like B-513044, show clearly legible writing imprinted from the layer of skin that was originally below such fragments. This information should help in a material reconstruction of the manuscript because it shows at specific points how the fragments were aligned in relation to one another in the original scroll. Textually the manuscript presents a Greek text that has been revised toward the MT (= *kaige* revision), and the order of the books agrees with the MT instead of LXX, at least in the fact that Jonah follows Micah (e.g., Tov 1990).

MurXII (Murabbaʿat 88) is the youngest of the Judean Desert manuscripts of the Minor Prophets, paleographically dated to the beginning of the second century CE (Milik 1961, 183). It was found rolled up as an extant scroll, which means the sequence of the books is rather secure, even if some of the twenty-one preserved columns are rather fragmentary. It is a large-sized scroll with 36 lines per column, clear spacing of lines and words, and regular script. The manuscript contains passages from Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah. It is therefore currently missing material only from the first book of the Twelve, Hosea, and the last, Malachi. As the beginning and end of scrolls typically eroded first, it is probable that MurXII contained

the Book of the Twelve in its MT arrangement and it is also textually very close to the MT (García Martínez 2004, 104; Brooke 2006, 27).

Perspectives on Textual History

Scholars have already done a great deal to evaluate the significance of the Judean Desert manuscripts for the textual history of the Minor Prophets, and several useful volumes present the preserved portions of the manuscripts and variants contained in (p. 66) them (Ego et al. 2005; Ulrich 2010, 590–626). As readily seen from the earlier survey, however, the classification of textual alignment of the individual manuscripts frequently differs, with scholars' determinations divided between two or more alternative categories. Hanne von Weissenberg (2012b, 388–394) has suggested that some of the problems in classification might be avoided by weighing the variants qualitatively on a case-by-case basis rather than quantitatively, and that the category "nonaligned" should be reconsidered because individual textual variants and manuscripts are "nonaligned" in very different ways. Indeed, there still remains much close textual work to be done on these manuscripts, both in assessing the readings of individual variants (e.g., Tigchelaar 2006) and in studying each of the variants and manuscripts one at a time (e.g., von Weissenberg 2011). In addition, a comparison of the Qumran *pesharim* and other interpretive works with known textual variants elsewhere demonstrates that many of the variants in the *lemmata* and used in the interpretation of passages agree with variant readings found elsewhere and should be considered as evidence for the textual history of the interpreted works. Of the Minor Prophets there are *pesharim* of the books of Hosea (4QpHos^{a} and 4QpHos^{b}), Micah (1QpMic and possibly 4QpMic), Nahum (4QpNah), Habakkuk (1QpHab), Zephaniah (1QpZeph and 4QpZeph), and possibly of Malachi (4Q253a); many other compositions from the Qumran Caves also attest to quotations of the Minor Prophets (see, e.g., García Martínez 2004, 112–117; Brooke 2006, 27–43; von Weissenberg 2012a).

Our recognition that the Minor Prophets are treated by the Qumran manuscripts as a collection of individual books that could be compiled in different kinds of collections has consequences for the treatment of variants in the manuscripts. Brooke has suggested that the Qumran manuscripts might represent more than one literary edition of the Twelve (2006, 34), and this might be so. But rather than focus on the level of the collection(s), which has already been done, focus should be put on significant variants in the individual books even when they are found as part of a particular collection (cf. Brooke 2006, 33). Scholars might pursue questions such as, how did variants representing different, previously known and unknown, textual traditions come to be present in a particular manuscript? How on a practical level did variants occur? Did a scribe at some point harmonize several different versions of a collection, or could it be that in some cases the textual affiliation would vary from book to book because a particular collection was drawn together from manuscripts of individual books? Should there thus be discussion concerning possible different literary editions of Amos or Hosea, for instance, rather than the entire collection?

Only a thorough examination of the variants in individual manuscripts and their accumulation in different books of the Minor Prophets might resolve these questions. If the alignment of variants in a manuscript does differ from book to book, it would show that it was most likely a compilation drawn together from individual books. Conversely, if the variants are rather uniformly aligned throughout a particular collection, it is likely that they accrued to the collection at the same time, as in the *kaige* revision in 8ḤevXIIgr. This might provide further clues as to whether the Minor Prophets were typically treated as individual books or a fixed collection, and whether such perceptions may have changed at some point during the late Second Temple period.

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Genres and Forms in the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explores the category of genre, the verbal conventions that signal what kind of messages are being sent and received. The prophetic books of the Bible are a distinctive genre. They are characterized by a dipolar rhetorical strategy, reinterpreting revelatory messages addressed by prophets to their audiences in the past as the basis for the writers' own revelatory messages addressed to their present and future readers. In prophetic books, genres function on two levels simultaneously. The oracular raw material on which the text is based takes various conventional forms of prophetic speech, and the literary composition into which it has been refashioned takes one of several conventional forms of prophetic books. In the Minor Prophets three types of prophetic books are represented—typological books, narrative books, and *massa* books—each of which utilizes various basic forms of prophetic speech. Jonah is sui generis.

Keywords: Keywords: prophet, genre, prophetic speech, prophetic book, typological, narrative, massa, Jonah, form criticism

(p. 73) IF one assumes that language serves to communicate, genre becomes a crucial consideration. Genres are verbal conventions that signal what kind of messages are being sent and received. In the contexts of different genres, the same words can take on different meanings. Effective communication thus depends on the sender clearly signaling and the receiver clearly recognizing the genre being used.

In daily life, most of the genres with which we communicate are tacitly assumed, in the texts we read as well as spoken conversation. Genre categories tend to be explicitly considered only when communication breaks down and we want to figure out why, or when interpretation becomes self-conscious for some other reason. When it comes to biblical literature, we are dealing with texts from a time and place very distant from our own. To ensure that we are understanding correctly the messages sent by their writers, it is advisable to make explicit consideration of genre an integral part of our methodology of interpretation.

In the modern era, the discipline of form criticism emerged within biblical studies to concentrate on the question of genre. With regard to prophetic literature, form critics focused on the genres of individual prophecies in conjunction with the historical task of distinguishing the prophets' original proclamations from later additions. More recently, as this historical project has reached a point of diminishing returns, it has become increasingly evident that prophetic literature is not just the written packaging of originally spoken prophecies but rather a prophetic creation in its own right. The scholarly focus has thus shifted to include the genres of prophetic literature, beginning with the prophetic book itself as well as its various types (Floyd 2003; Ben Zvi 2003a).

A genre is defined by its typical form. In biblical literature there are a few genres that are explicitly named (e.g., the *mashal*), thus showing that genre was an operative category for the ancient writers. Mostly, however, the genres of biblical texts are tacitly assumed, thus leaving it up to the interpreter to deduce, describe, and name the genres to which the texts in question belong. The structural elements that define a genre can be (p. 74) used in a formulaic way, or there can be considerable variation in the ways they are deployed. In either case, the structural elements that are typical of the genre define the organization of the text as a whole and work together to produce a similar rhetorical effect. Prophetic books show considerable diversity in the way they each make use of the same set of structural elements.

In complex texts, one genre can sometimes be subsumed within another, as, for example, when a novel reproduces the text of a letter sent from one character to another. When one genre is used in a way that subordinates it to another, its characteristic effect is coopted to enhance the effect of the genre into which it has been incorporated. Prophetic books are complex texts that incorporate into themselves various prophecies of different kinds, weaving them into the text in various ways.

In line with the preceding observations we will first consider the genre of the prophetic book as well as the main types of prophetic books that are found in the Minor Prophets. Then we will survey a representative sample of some genres of prophecy that have been incorporated into the books of the Minor Prophets.

The Prophetic Book and Its Dipolar Rhetorical Strategy

In comparison with the various kinds of mantic texts that are found in ancient Near Eastern and Greek cultures, the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible are distinctive. Prophetic oracles were recorded and collected in several ancient societies, but only the Jews of Achaemenid Yehud recast recorded oracles so that revelations from the past were revitalized for readers of their own time and thus also for readers of subsequent times (Nissinen 2016, 8–15; Lange 2006; Floyd 2015).

All prophetic books present themselves as the record of revelations received by a prophetic figure in the past. The Minor Prophets do this in a variety of ways. Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah are entitled with superscriptions that locate the prophetic activity of each of these figures during the reigns of particular kings of Israel and/or Judah. Haggai and Zechariah narrate the onset of prophetic activity on specific dates in the reign of the Persian king Darius. Obadiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk are associated by the contents of their revelations—and in the case of Nahum by its superscription as well—with particular international situations: the Edomites' participation in the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the fall of Nineveh, and the Babylonian invasion of Judah, respectively. Neither the superscription nor the contents of Joel and Malachi relate them to a particular historical situation. The reception of their revelations instead is described in relation to a particular kind of situation in an indefinite past: in the case of Joel, a crisis that was disastrous both ecologically and militarily; and in the case of Malachi, a deterioration of community life because of corrupt cultic practices. Jonah is unique among the prophetic books because of its sustained narration of the prophet's adventures, but (p. 75) even in this case the narrative is introduced as a story about a revelation that Jonah received once upon a time.

In eight cases—Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—the revelation received by the prophet and conveyed by the book is described as "the word of the LORD" (*debar YHWH*). In four other cases—Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk—it is described as something the prophet "envisioned," using either the verb *ḥaza* or the related noun *ḥazon*. This terminological difference may have once indicated different modes of revelation, but in the present texts such differences have been largely effaced. Although the biblical text allows us to see that there once were various forms of divination that were retrospectively considered theologically legitimate (unlike those, e.g., in Deut 18:10–11), it does not give us enough information to clearly describe their differences. From a canonical perspective, discerning "the word of the LORD" and "envisioning" YHWH's designs are practically the same.

Three prophetic books—Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi—as well as two sections of Zechariah (chaps. 9–11 and 12–14) also have the label *massa* in their superscriptions. The meaning of this term will be discussed later.

Although the introductions to the Minor Prophets are the primary indicators that the revelations they report were received in times past, there are also other indicators. In a few instances we get short stretches of narrative through which we catch glimpses of the prophet interacting with his contemporaries (e.g., Amos 7:10–17; Hag 1:12)., There are also references to places, other nations, and major events like the fall of Babylon that figure prominently in Israel's past.

Despite these occasional signals of a temporal location in the time of the prophet, readers soon discover that the texts do not consistently maintain this historical distance. The description can become so vague that any sense of a particular place or time is lost altogether. Alternatively the temporal perspectives may shift kaleidoscopically, as when refer-

ences to the fall of the southern kingdom are superimposed on references to the earlier fall of the northern kingdom. Books attributed to prophets from monarchic times conclude with prophecies of restoration predicated on the exile having happened. An event being prophesied is described as if it has already happened and in the same breath as if it is still about to happen. Prophecies that are dated precisely in relation to the mundane developments of the Persian restoration veer off into an uncertain course of cataclysmic eschatological events. Although prophetic books present themselves as reports of past revelations, they are not simply that.

Prophetic books probably originated with revelations received and communicated by a prophet to his contemporaries. These books in their present form, however, were produced by scribal editors who have revised and extended the original prophecies, reinterpreting them in light of subsequent developments. This process of scribal reinterpretation has both transmitted and transformed the words of the prophets themselves. Such reinterpretation is premised on the historical memory of having undergone the experience of defeat, exile, and restoration. From the context of Persian-period Jerusalem, the scribes of Yehud look back on prophets who seem to have rightly assessed some aspect of this historical process. Their prophecies, vindicated in the course of (p. 76) events, have a surplus of meaning that enables them to be reinterpreted analogously in relation to subsequent historical situations (Floyd 2006).

On the one hand, the writers of prophetic books want their readers to understand that the messages communicated by these texts are rooted in historical reality. They are based on revelations that were in fact received by prophets in the past, revelations concerning what YHWH was bringing about at that time. On the other hand, the writers of prophetic books also want their readers to understand that because these prophets rightly read the signs of their times, their revelations have become templates of what YHWH might be doing at other times. Prophecies related to one historical situation can therefore be reapplied to another similar historical situation. Readers are thus caught up in a dipolar oscillation between overhearing the prophet address his contemporaries with “the word of YHWH” in the past and realizing that the book, which emerged through a process of scribal transformation, now addresses them with “the word of YHWH” in the present.

Amos is a prime example. The book’s superscription (1:1) locates the prophet during the time of kings who reigned around the middle of the eighth century BCE. Most of Amos’s prophecies are directed toward the northern kingdom of Israel, indicting it for the sin of officially establishing idolatrous worship of YHWH at the royal sanctuaries in Dan and Bethel and also for the concomitant sin of economic oppression of the poor. Prophecies calling for repentance (e.g., 5:4–7, 11–12) are mixed with those announcing the inevitability of disaster (e.g., 2:6–16), suggesting that catastrophe has become unavoidable because the calls to repentance went unheeded (4:8–11; 7:1–8:3).

If one reads Amos from the temporal perspective of the prophet’s own time, repentance becomes no longer a live option. Amos can also be read, though, in relation to later events. Judah is occasionally included in prophecies of punishment (2:4-5 and 5:1; cf.

1:2a), and in conclusion the book looks forward to the restoration of "the booth of David that is fallen" (9:11–15). This means that in the final analysis readers must take into account that not only has Israel fallen, just as Amos foretold, but Judah has also fallen for similar reasons. The downfall of the two kingdoms becomes a moral object lesson, calling future generations not to fall into the same fateful sins and calling them to repent if they do. Future hope is premised on learning this lesson from the past.

Readers find in the book the same pattern of divine involvement with Israel reapplied to understand the similar fate of Judah. This invites consideration of whether the same pattern is evident in their own day. Where do we see idolatrous religion and economic oppression of the poor become similarly interrelated, threatening similarly disastrous consequences if those responsible fail to repent? The book of Amos affirms that whenever this is the case, YHWH is at work, still acting in the same characteristic way that the prophet Amos perceived. This is the rhetorical function of the doxological passages interspersed throughout the book (4:13, 5:8–9, and 9:5–6), which identify YHWH's involvement in the particular historical context of the eighth century BCE with the cosmic processes through which he, as the Creator, continually sustains and transforms the whole universe.

(p. 77) Types of Prophetic Books

By means of their dipolar rhetorical strategy, prophetic books invite their readers to draw analogies between situations encountered in the text and their own situations. Prophetic books can be differentiated in terms of the ways they engage readers in this analogy-drawing process. Within the Minor Prophets there are three different types: (1) books that invite readers to draw a typological correspondence between what they find in the text and what they see in their own situation; (2) books that spin a narrative and invite readers to imagine themselves as participants in the unfolding course of events; and (3) books or sections of books labeled *massa* which invite readers to see how prophecies that once appeared dubious have been reaffirmed, and to consider what this might show about YHWH's involvement in their own time. We will take up each type in turn and lastly consider Jonah, which is in a category all its own.

Typological Books

Several of the Minor Prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, and Zephaniah—fall into the category of typological books. They have the same combination of basic elements: (1) prophecies describing defeat and exile as YHWH's punishment for his people's unfaithfulness; (2) prophecies describing the renewal of YHWH's relationship with his people in the context of an often violent transformation of the world order; and (3) prophecies describing YHWH's restoration of his people to an internationally recognized land of peace, security, and prosperity, free from imperial domination. These elements can be sequenced and alternated in various ways, and the description can be prospective and/or retrospective. Some books elaborate one element in extensive detail while treating an-

other relatively briefly. The only constant is that the third element always comes last even if it also occurs earlier in the mix.

Despite the great variation in surface structure, these books have basically the same underlying conceptuality, which gives them pretty much the same rhetorical force. For readers of Persian-period Jerusalem, these books served to remind them of how they came to be in their present situation and of the theological ambiguity of the present. On the one hand, they have suffered defeat and exile, the world order has been reconfigured through the hegemony of the Persians, and Yehud has been restored in a new and more viable form. On the other hand, they are still under imperial domination. Although there has been a restoration, the benefits of which are real and considerable, they are still in a kind of exile from which they can hope that YHWH will eventually deliver them more fully.

The books of this type invite typological readings by their use of description based on analogies. Amos and Micah draw an analogy between the fate of Israel and the fate of Judah. Hosea, in its introduction, sets up an analogy between the three basic elements of (p. 78) this type of prophetic book and the phases of the marital relationship between the prophet and the prostitute Gomer: incorrigible infidelity, devastating divorce, and renewed courtship and remarriage. Joel conflates description of an imminent crisis in terms of an insect plague and a military onslaught. Zephaniah compares YHWH's violent transformation of the world order with the primordial flood. Obadiah describes Edom's betrayal of Judah in the Babylonian crisis in terms of the fraternal relationship between Jacob and Esau.

The original readers are confronted with the question of whether they have learned the lessons of their past. Can they maintain the kind of relationship with YHWH that gives them hope for transformation into a more glorious future? Or will they fall into the same kind of unfaithfulness that led YHWH to punish them in the first place, thus condemning themselves to ongoing exile? For readers of later generations, the alternatives are similar, depending on the sense in which they find themselves "in exile."

Narrative Books

Both Haggai and Zech 1–8 engage readers in narratives that recount the constitution of Yehud as a province of the Persian empire, focusing on (1) reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple and (2) inauguration of the leaders who will be responsible for its administration and for the governance of the province. Readers are invited to imagine themselves immersed in the story, experiencing the events as they unfold, to see what questions arise.

Haggai's narrative moves from a time when the temple rebuilding effort had stalled to a time shortly after relaying the foundation, emphasizing the difference that a functioning cult can make for the overall prosperity of the community. The successful resumption of the rebuilding legitimates Zerubbabel and Joshua's taking the roles of governor and high priest, respectively. They are able to exercise their authority with a degree of local auton-

omy because YHWH is transforming the world order—"shaking the heavens, the earth, and the nations" (2:7; 3:21b–22a)—so as to make Yehud's niche in it secure.

The narrative of Zech 1–8 begins with a brief recap of how YHWH, because of the prophets' unheeded calls to repentance, justly punished his people with exile (1:1–6). Now, having learned their lesson, they stand ready for a new beginning, first described in a series of prophecies (1:7–6:15), mostly reports of fantastic visions. The text depicts the temple rebuilding project, together with restoration of the civic community organized around it, as the central focus of YHWH's renewal of the cosmos. Zerubbabel is the agent designated by YHWH to bring this project to completion. Advised by the divinely commissioned high priest Joshua, he will govern the province and together they will be responsible for the temple's maintenance. A second series of prophecies (7:1–8:23) describes this new beginning in terms of a shift from fasts that mourn defeat and exile to feasts that celebrate the blessings resulting from the completion of the temple. Jerusalem will become a city famed for its peacefulness, prosperity, and civility, to which displaced Jews long to return and of which other nations are envious.

Both Haggai and Zech 1–8 invite readers (1) to imaginatively recapitulate the struggle to define the polity of Yehud as a temple-centered community, given the constraints of (p. 79) Persian hegemony and intra-Jewish dissent; (2) to see the outcome of this struggle as the result of YHWH's creativity; and (3) to understand that this way of describing Yehud's origins has implications for its future destiny. In Haggai, the completion of the temple opens up new possibilities that promise greater freedom. In Zech 1–8, however, complications are envisioned with regard to the form of polity represented by Zerubbabel and Joshua. These are addressed in the two *massa* appendices in chapters 9–11 and 12–14.

Massa Books

Three books—Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi—are called a *massa* in their superscriptions. In Zechariah, two subsections (chaps. 9–11 and 12–14) also have superscriptions identifying each of them as a *massa* in relation to the rest of the book. A *massa* is a prophecy that reinterprets a previous prophecy whose fulfillment has become problematic in some way. Such reinterpretation involves (1) identifying a particular current development as a sign that YHWH is still working in accord with what was previously prophesied despite appearances to the contrary, and (2) urging addressees to respond accordingly. Readers are invited to consider whether in their own experience there are similar patterns of divine involvement in human affairs (Floyd 2002).

In the case of Nahum, previous prophecies had claimed that the departure of the Assyrians from their unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem in the late eighth century marked the beginning of their downfall. The subsequent expansion of Assyria's dominion over the next few decades called these prophecies into question but in the late seventh century BCE Nineveh finally fell, thus showing that YHWH was still carrying out his previously revealed intentions. The appropriate response is to rejoice (2:1) (Floyd 2000, 1–78; 2002,

412–413). Readers are prompted to consider whether a similar divine initiative can be discerned in the long-overdue overthrow of present-day tyrants.

In Habakkuk the problem is not an unfulfilled prophecy. On the contrary, a prophecy has come all too true. The prophet had received a revelation that YHWH would send the Babylonians to invade Judah (1:5–11), and this has indeed happened but in a way that seems out of proportion with any consequences that Judah may have deserved. This outcome implies that YHWH is fundamentally unjust in his ordering of world affairs, unless he is perhaps allowing an unjust situation to exist temporarily in order to teach his people a needed lesson (1:2–4, 12–17). The prophet undertakes an oracular inquiry to test this perception (2:1), and his hunch is confirmed. He receives a revelation affirming that those who trust in YHWH's justice will live and that the imperialist conquerors will be undone by their own greed (2:2–5). The appropriate response is to "wait" for this to eventually come to pass (2:3), and the complaint in chapter 3 models this attitude of trustful waiting for deliverance even when it seems unlikely (3:17–19a) (Floyd 2000, 79–161; 2002, 413–415). Readers are challenged to question what seems to be divine complicity with injustice, seeking to prove the truth through their own experience. Could the present chaotic situation be hiding the underlying divine creativity that will eventually resolve the crisis?

(p. 80) For Malachi the revelation that has become problematic is the oral *torah* given by the Levitical priests. They are prophet-like "messengers of YHWH" whose revelatory guidance is supposed to help the people maintain covenant fidelity in their worship and daily living (2:5–9). Because the Levitical priests have not fulfilled this responsibility faithfully, the temple cult and the community's family relationships are in disarray, but YHWH is taking action to restore the integrity of such discredited revelation. He has already acted, providing the faithful with an authoritative *torah* in written form (3:16), thus revealing norms which will serve to determine conduct and practices that are right and faithful (3:18). YHWH is also sending his "messenger" a reformer who will "purify the sons of Levi" (3:1–3), thus making them trustworthy interpreters of *torah*. The appropriate response is, as it were, to live by the book: "Remember the *torah* of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel" (4:4; Heb 3:22) (Floyd 2000, 559–626; 2002, 415–418). Readers are prodded to consider how one might discern divine initiatives in the recognition that corrupted religious institutions stand in need of reform.

In the case of Zechariah, the book as a whole is not a *massa*. It is a prophetic narrative (chaps. 1–8) that has two reinterpretations appended (chaps. 9–11 and 12–14), each of which is designated a *massa*.

The *massa* in chapters 9–11 gives prophetic insight into the transition from Persian to Greek rule. On the one hand, this change shows that YHWH is again transforming the world order in a way that bodes well for Yehud. It opens up the possibility of a more radical restoration, removing the vestiges of exile that remained under the Persians. On the other hand, the recalcitrant "shepherd" leaders of Yehud refuse to take advantage of this

opportunity, preferring to collude with the new imperial regime so as to maintain the status quo. The anonymous prophet, who is here elaborating on the pattern of divine involvement discerned in chapters 1–8, dramatizes for the leaders the losses resulting from their irresponsibility and announces that YHWH will raise up a consummately bad "shepherd," thus precipitating a leadership crisis that will discredit the legitimacy of the ruling class. Zechariah 9–11 leaves open the question of whether the designated leaders will realize the sociopolitical possibilities that YHWH has created for Yehud. The appropriate response is to "rejoice" (9:3) over the possibilities inherent in the new situation, and to "return" (9:12), while acknowledging full well the impediments that stand in the way of realizing them (Floyd 2000, 440–492; 2002, 418–419). Readers who follow this reinterpretation of Zech 1–8 are invited to consider such questions as whether new developments are evidence of divine creativity, inviting them to embrace necessary changes, and to consider how they would respond to the intransigence of those with a vested interest in the status quo.

The *massa* in chapters 12–14 seeks to discern YHWH's involvement in the catastrophic events through which the constitution of Yehud, defined in 1:7–8:23 and reaffirmed albeit problematically in 9:1–11:17, comes twice under attack from foreign enemies. In the first instance (12:1–13:6), YHWH enables Jerusalem to defend itself but at great cost. In the second instance (14:1–21), YHWH allows Jerusalem to be destroyed as part of a cataclysmic transformation of the world order, through which a new Jerusalem emerges as the capital of an international kingdom ruled by YHWH himself. (p. 81) The turning point between these two episodes is YHWH's call for the assassination of a "shepherd" leader to precipitate the crisis (13:7–9). Chapters 12–14 reinterpret 1:7–8:23 by asserting that the form in which Yehud has existed since the Persian restoration, although divinely ordained, has become increasingly untenable under changing historical circumstances. Chapters 12–14 reinterpret chapters 9–11 by asserting that YHWH is actualizing the role of the "worthless shepherd" (11:15–17), whose malfeasance will render Yehud indefensible under attack. The appropriate response is to "flee" (14:5b) in anticipation of YHWH's new creation (Floyd 2000, 493–558; 2002, 419–429). Readers who follow this reinterpretation of Zech 1–8 and 9–11 are invited to consider such questions as whether divine creativity can be discerned in the midst of chaotic events, calling them to abandon norms formerly recognized as God-given in favor of new, not yet fully defined possibilities.

Jonah

Jonah defies classification on the basis of similarity with any other prophetic book. Zechariah 1–8 and Haggai are also narratives, but their rudimentary linking of episodes is hardly comparable to Jonah's well-developed plot. Ehud Ben Zvi (2003b) has aptly described it as a "meta-prophetic book," a prophetic book that explores issues relating to the very phenomenon of prophecy itself. This is indicated by the ways in which Jonah is atypical and the extremes to which these atypicalities are taken. Jonah is the most rebellious and also the most "successful" of the prophets. Other prophets are reluctant to accept their call, but Johan runs away. Other prophets are rejected by those to whom they proclaim the word of YHWH, but Jonah's message is immediately accepted. The narrative

lacks verisimilitude in significant respects. For example, the foreigners—both sailors and Ninevites—act like "good Israelites." Nineveh repents and survives, but Jonah's readers know that Nineveh did not repent and was destroyed. The book concludes not on a note of future hope but with an ambiguous ending that leaves open significant questions about the nature of prophecy, the role of the prophet, the character of YHWH, and the nature of repentance and forgiveness. The overall effect is to create a context for the interpretation of prophetic books in general "a theological and discursive space in which some divine attributes and central theological or ideological notions informed each other…a space that set isolated claims in their 'due' theological proportion through interaction with other claims that were equally valid within the same space" (Ben Zvi 2003b, 99).

Prophecies within Prophetic Books

Within prophetic books, prophetic discourse is organized by shifts in form and content marking transitions from one section to another. These sections are structured by the writers of prophetic books to facilitate the continual reading and rereading of (p. 82) these texts in search of "the word of YHWH" (Ben Zvi 2003a, 283–293). The sections of prophetic books differ rhetorically from one another largely because of their resemblance to different genres of prophetic speech. As described earlier, the dipolar rhetorical strategy of a prophetic book invites readers to imagine that they are overhearing the prophet address his contemporaries while simultaneously recognizing that they are being directly addressed by the writer. The ways in which the writer addresses his readers are discerned by analyzing how the sections of a prophetic book are structured. The ways in which the writer lets his readers overhear the prophet are discerned by identifying the genre(s) of prophetic speech on which each section is based. A particular section may resemble a recognizable form of prophetic speech because the text preserves authentic sayings of the prophet that were recorded, transmitted, and reinterpreted as they are finally incorporated into the book bearing his name. Or the resemblance may be due to the writer's imitation of conventional oracular genres in order to convey his impression of how the prophet would have sounded to those who first heard him. In either case, identifying the genre(s) of prophecy used in each section and analyzing how they figure in its composition are key to understanding its message.

Genres of Prophetic Speech

Different kinds of prophecies are prominent in the Minor Prophets.

Prophecy of Punishment. A type of prophetic speech that announces disaster to a group or an individual because of some offense against YHWH. The two definitive elements of this genre are (1) an accusation directly addressed to the individual or group and (2) an announcement of punishment which describes the disaster to which the addressee(s) are being subjected. There is considerable flexibility in the way these two basic elements are sequenced and combined with other miscellaneous elements. Examples include Hos 2:7–

9; Amos 2:1–3; 4:1–3; 7:14–17; 9:8–10; Zeph 1:2–18; and Mal 1:6–14. A major variant is the *Prophecy of Punishment against a Foreign Nation.* Such a prophecy could be fictively addressed to a foreign nation but actually proclaimed to an Israelite/Judahite audience, in which case it would serve more to reassure the audience that YHWH was acting against their enemies rather than to inform the foreigners of YHWH's intentions toward them. When presented in series, such prophecies can serve to describe YHWH's involvement in the international arena (e.g., Amos 1:3–18; Zeph 2:5–7, 8–11, 12–15) (Floyd 2000, 635; Tucker 1978, 38–45).

Prophecy of Salvation. A type of prophetic speech announcing that health, peace, prosperity, or restoration, and so forth, is coming to an individual or a group as a manifestation of YHWH's favor. The two definitive elements of this genre are (1) an announcement describing what sort of salvation is coming and (2) a statement grounding this eventuality in some attribute or prior act of YHWH. Either element can come first and be followed by the other. Either or both elements can be extensively elaborated, with (p. 83) great variation in the stylistic details. Examples include Amos 9:11–15 and Zeph 3:18–20 (Floyd 2000, 636; Westermann 1991).

Prophetic Complaint. A prophetic adaptation of the communal complaint psalm, which was recited at a sanctuary by cultic personnel on behalf of a community in distress. A plea for deliverance, addressed directly to YHWH, is the definitive element. Additional elements prominently include a description of the distress and an affirmation of confidence in YHWH's ability to deliver. Often there is hymnic description of YHWH's praiseworthy attributes or deeds, which serves as the basis for the affirmation of confidence. When a prophet proclaims a communal complaint in a liturgical context, the constitutive elements are formulated so as to give voice to the prophet in his role as the intermediary between YHWH and the community. The parade example of this genre in the Minor Prophets is the psalm of Habakkuk (Hab 3:2–19a) (Floyd 2000, 147–161, 638).

Prophetic Exhortation. A type of prophetic speech that attempts to persuade addressees to think or act in a particular way. The definitive elements are commands plus a persuasive rationale that is based on claims about YHWH's involvement in the situation. Other prophetic genres, such as prophecy of punishment and prophecy of salvation, can be subsumed within the rationale. Examples include Zeph 3:14–20 and Hag 2:3–9. When couched in negative rather than positive terms, this type of discourse can be described as *Prophetic Admonition.* A prominent variant is the *Prophetic Call to Repentance*, in which the addressees are urged to reverse a pattern of behavior that is self-destructive and/or offensive to YHWH, and the rationale is to avert the disastrous consequences that YHWH will bring about if they fail to change their ways. Examples include Zeph 2:1–4 and Mal 2:1–9, 13–17 (Floyd 2000, 634, 639, 637; Vanlier 1982).

Prophetic Vision Report. A type of report that describes, mostly in first person but occasionally in third person, what a prophet sees and sometimes simultaneously hears in an extraordinary experience charged with revelatory significance. The basic elements are (1) an announcement that the prophet has "seen" or "been shown" something and (2) a de-

scription of what has been perceived, with some indication that it is revelatory. The scene can be mundane or heavenly, and the things seen can range from ordinary objects of daily life like a cooking pot (Jer 1:13) to bizarre things like a flying scroll (Zech 5:1–4). The revelatory nature of the vision is often given in oracular speech of YHWH (e.g., Amos 7:7–9) or in the explanation of an interpreting angel (e.g., Zech 5:5–11). Prominent examples in the Minor Prophets are the series of visions in Zech 1:7–6:8 and Amos 7:1–9, 8:1–3, 9:1–4 (Floyd 2000, 644–645; Hayes and Tiemeyer 2014).

Report of Oracular Inquiry. A type of report that describes (1) the attempt of a prophet, priest, or some other intermediary to seek a divine revelation, either at someone else's request (e.g., Jer 21:1–14) or on his own initiative (e.g., Hab 2:1–5) and (2) the revelation received in response to this inquiry, usually in the form of an oracle spoken or a vision disclosed by YHWH (e.g., 2 Kgs 8:7–114)—or, in the case of a priestly inquiry, in the casting of sacred lots (e.g., 1 Sam 14:36b–42). Examples within the Minor Prophets include Hab 2:1–5, Zech 7:2–7, and Hag 2:10–13 (Floyd 2000, 647; Long 1973; Thelle 2002).

Report of Prophetic Symbolic Action. A report that describes a prophet's involvement in action understood to be a symbolic dramatization of a prophetic message. The three typical (p. 84) elements are (1) the prophet's being commissioned by YHWH to perform the action; (2) the prophet's compliance; and (3) an explanation of the significance of the action, usually in the form of an oracular speech of YHWH. In some cases, one of these elements is missing, but the others are formulated so as to imply it. Examples include Hos 1:2–3, 3:1–2; Hag 2:10–19; Zech 6:9–15; and Zech 11:10–11, 14 (Floyd 2000, 646–647; Stacey 1990).

These sorts of prophecies often form the structural "backbone" of the various sections of prophetic books. Recognizing them is key to understanding how prophetic books invite readers to imagine themselves listening to the prophet speak the word of YHWH to their contemporaries and how prophetic books adapt this literary pretext to address the word of YHWH directly to their readers.

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Metaphor in the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explores metaphor in the Minor Prophets, one of many figures of speech in the Minor Prophets. This figure of speech has the power to capture and affect the human imagination. Many of the metaphors found in the Minor Prophets depict human–divine relationships, human–human relationships, and in rare instances, human–nonhuman relationships. Bible scholars typically study metaphor theory and the different kinds of metaphors found in the Minor Prophets. Only a few Bible scholars venture into the realm of cognitive linguistic and conceptual metaphor theory. After commenting on the development of metaphor and metaphor theory, the essay highlights work done in this area by Bible scholars. Central to the discussion is the metaphorical language for the Divine. The essay concludes with a clarion call to study the Minor Prophets in the context of the present-day, globalized, twenty-first-century world that offers readers new metaphors, especially as they pertain to the Divine.

Keywords: Keywords: metaphor, metaphor theory, cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, dead metaphors, masculinity studies, feminist studies, globalization, marginalization

METAPHORS have the power to capture the human imagination. They can inspire, teach lessons, and shed light on realities not altogether seen, comprehended, or understood. Because metaphors are often drawn from daily life experience and thus often reflect reality, they have the potential of enabling one to discover and give new meaning to that which has become commonplace. Some metaphors can become entrenched and obsolete over time; other metaphors can be wondrously new and fresh. Whatever the case may be, metaphors encourage people to make connections, and they can even become the impetus for the transference of feelings between matrices. Because of their appeal to the imagination and senses, metaphors have the capacity to move people at deep levels of their being.

The poetic and artistic literature labeled "Minor Prophets" contains many metaphors. Although some of the metaphors focus on human relationships, most of the metaphors concentrate on the perceived human–divine relationship. New Testament biblical scholar and

scholar of spirituality Sandra Schneiders (Schneiders 2001, 71) argues that the central question for the twenty-first century is the "God question," specifically whether or not there is a God, and if there is, then how people understand the Divine. In an increasingly literal world, how people perceive, understand, and talk about the *mysterium tremendum* whom many theologians call "the ground of all being" can have an effect on how we live and understand our lives and how we live on the planet. This relationship is the subject of conceptual metaphor theory.

In the area of metaphor studies, research and findings have exploded in cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, and theology. Scholars working on metaphor from the perspective of their respective disciplines have often taken an interdisciplinary approach. It has led them to consider how people think about the Divine, what metaphors have been used to express the human–divine relationship, and how these metaphors affect people's lives and behavior.

(p. 86) The works of cognitive linguistic scholars Therese DesCamp and Eve E. Sweetser (DesCamp and Sweetser 2005) and theologians Sallie McFague (McFague 1982, 1987) and Brian Wren (Wren 1988) ground this discussion of metaphor in the Minor Prophets, along with a feminist-liberationist perspective that calls into question metaphors pertaining to the human–divine relationship. The first section comments on the development of metaphor and metaphor theory, outlining the newer cognitive approach to metaphor and its connections and contributions to theology and the study of the "God" metaphors in the Bible. The second section highlights selected works on metaphor in the Minor Prophets. The third section discusses the work of Karolien Vermeulen (Vermeulen 2017) and Wilhelm J. Wessels (Wessels 2014), two Bible scholars who employ the newer cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory to metaphors in the Minor Prophets. The concluding section assesses the metaphors used in the Minor Prophets as a whole and suggests a path forward, especially for contemporary Bible readers.

Surveying the Landscape of Metaphor and Metaphor Theory

Aristotle's definition of metaphor influenced metaphor theories for centuries. For Aristotle:

> Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from genus to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy. (Aristotle "The Poetics" 1457b, lines 6–9; translation by Bywater 2017)

From Aristotle's thought developed the substitution theory of metaphor. The Roman rhetorician Quintilian and Roman orator and philosopher Cicero used Aristotle's definition to develop their own ideas on the nature of metaphor.

Until the twentieth century, the substitution theory of metaphor was the primary theory. In 1936, Ivor A. Richards offered a new theory (Richards 1936), followed by other theoreticians such as Max Black (Black 1962) and Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1977). Building on Black's understanding of what he calls "associated commonplaces," which refers to conventional language and its cognitive meaning, cognitive linguist George Lakoff (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987), philosopher Mark Johnson (Johnson 1981), and English literature scholar Mark Turner (Lakoff and Turner 1989) advanced the understanding of metaphor further. Lakoff and Turner (1989) made the distinction between basic conceptual metaphor and its linguistic expression. For Lakoff, metaphors are more than linguistic expressions. Metaphors involve thought and reason (Lakoff 1993, 208). Hence, "the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another" (Lakoff 1993, 203). In other words, the locus of (p. 87) metaphor is thought and, as such, "our everyday behavior reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience" (Lakoff 1993, 204). Thus, a relationship exists between metaphor and human behavior.

In his work on cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory, Job Y. Jindo advances Lakoff's thought, explaining that "the conceptual domain by which we understand another domain is called a source domain, and the conceptual domain that is understood by this source domain is called a target domain" (Jindo 2009, 226). A correspondence exists between the constituent conceptual elements of the source domain and the constituent elements of the target domain. The correspondences are called mappings (Jindo 2009, 226–227). Jindo argues that "delving into the phenomenon of metaphor thus reveals the mindset of language users " (Jindo 2009, 228). Additionally, Jindo argues that through an analysis of metaphor used in the Bible, we gain access to the conceptual world of biblical religion (Jindo 2009, 232).

Susan E. Hylen and Hilary Marlow take Jindo's points a step further. Hylen argues that "understanding metaphors conceptually helps to address their effect on the imagination. Metaphors invite the reader or hearer to take an imaginative leap, to envision the world in a particular way" (Hylen, 2011, 783). Marlow asserts that

> the capacity of metaphor to create conceptual meaning and thus to offer a new perspective on reality contributes to the possibility that the biblical texts may have something significant to contribute to contemporary perceptions of the world we live in.
>
> (Marlow 2009, 123)

Metaphors do have the capacity to affect readers' and hearers' imaginations and can give readers and hearers access not only to the mindsets and attitudes of those who shaped the metaphors but also to the world of biblical religion, but a point to be remembered is that readers and hearers also give meaning to metaphors that allow metaphors to be heard in new ways and in new contexts. Hence, metaphors are dynamic and not static.

Building on the contributions that cognitive linguistics has made to the understanding of metaphor and the development of conceptual metaphor theory, Mary Therese DesCamp and Eve E. Sweetser argue that “cognitive linguistics research is indispensable to the theological debate concerning metaphors for God” (DesCamp and Sweetser 2005, 208). They also note that “little of the evidence brought forward by cognitive analysts of metaphor has been employed in theological conversation about God” (DesCamp and Sweetser 2005, 208). Their pioneering research brings cognitive linguistics into dialogue with the Bible’s metaphors for God. Their study yields several conclusions. First, relational metaphors for God are preferred for God. Second, many of the biblical metaphors emphasize “the capacity of God to exercise authority, and to punish or destroy” (DesCamp and Sweetser 2005, 233). Third, the God metaphors “actually constitute our relationship with God in crucial ways.” Fourth, “the criterion for a good God-metaphor—at least one which will have staying-power within our culture—would seem to be the ability to fulfill the human need to see God in terms of salient characteristics” (DesCamp and Sweetser 2005, 236; see also Sweetser 1990).

(p. 88) Joining in the conversation about metaphor and the concept of God are theologians Salie McFague and Brian Wren. McFague maintains that a metaphor is like a two-way street. Both fields or subjects “are influenced or changed by being brought into relationship with the other” (McFague 1982, 38). Furthermore, when human images are used as God metaphors, the human images gain status and take on divine qualities because they are placed in interaction with the divine (McFague 1982, 38). A case in point is Mary Daly’s famous statement, “If God is male, then the male is God” (Daly 1973, 19). McFague comments further that dead metaphors—metaphors that have lost their tension and ability to shock—comprise most ordinary language (McFague 1982, 15). She considers the metaphor God as Father to be a “dead metaphor” to the extent that it has come to be understood as literal and therefore is idolatrous (McFague 1982, 1–29, 145–192; see also Long 1994). The same holds true for other God metaphors, many of which are now taken literally by readers of the Minor Prophets and have become “dead” because they keep the reader locked in anthropocentric and androcentric images of the Divine even when the images are taken from the natural world environment.

Perhaps the most insightful theologian on metaphor is Brian Wren (Wren 1988, 1989), who makes a case that the best language we have for God points to a revealed mystery. Wren raises two key questions for the appropriation of God metaphors in the Minor Prophets: “How far do our metaphors truly reveal God?” and “Which metaphors reveal God best?” (Wren 1988, 300). Since the character God and the metaphors used to conceptualize this mysterious “being” that defies human understanding play such a major role in the Minor Prophets, Wren’s two questions invite biblical scholars and readers of the text to enter into deep reflective, analytical, and thought about the God metaphors found in prophetic literature.

Wren also gives consideration to what he calls “systematic metaphors,” ones that strongly structure human thinking and behavior especially in relation to the Divine. In this regard, Wren’s understanding of metaphor is somewhat similar to that of Lakoff and Jindo, but he

nonetheless asserts that “the language we use does not determine what we think…but it can certainly put us in blinders from which it is very difficult to escape” (Wren 1988, 301). Wren does see human behavior, language use, and the way people think systematically intertwined: how people speak about God can shape, slant, and reflect their thinking and perception of God (Wren 1988, 300–302). He notes further that the metaphors used for God, such as “parent,” “sustainer,” sovereign,” among others do not have “that imaginative power and do not resonate with the deepest levels of human beings’ personal experience” (Wren 1988, 307). In other words, they are on some level “dead metaphors” and are not “embodied metaphors.” Finally, where a systematic use of metaphor exists, Wren suggests that the following questions be asked: “Who benefits from it, who suffers from it, and what power relationships is it trying to perpetuate and legitimate?” (Wren 1988, 302). In these ways, Wren opens the door to a deeper critical hermeneutical assessment of metaphor in the Minor Prophets and, for that matter, in the Bible as a whole. Some Bible scholars working in the area of feminist hermeneutics and gender and cultural studies have already begun this critical assessment of metaphor, but I will later suggest that their work, especially with respect to a critical assessment of the metaphors for the Divine, does not go far and deep enough in the context of this twenty-first-century world.

(p. 89) Metaphors: Dead or Alive? A Sampling of Scholarly Discourse

Bible scholars working in the area of the Minor Prophets write extensively on the topic of metaphor. Some scholars focus on identifying and exploring how various metaphors function in the Book of the Twelve. For example, Anne Moore (Moore 2009, 143–161) examines the metaphor of “king” in Zephaniah and Micah to shed light on how this metaphor provides an understanding of the kingship of God in these two books and other texts and how the nations are called to serve YHWH as king. Walter Brueggemann (1981), Pierre J. P. Van Hecke (2003), and Juan Cruz (2016) all explore metaphor in the book of Micah. Brueggemann argues that Mic 4:1–5 is “an example of imaginative use of concrete and anticipatory metaphor to evoke an alternative world in the consciousness of Israel” (Brueggemann 1981, 189). Van Hecke considers the positive pastoral metaphors in Mic 7:14 and their different interpretations in contemporary exegesis and then proposes a new reading of the verse’s “meaning.” Cruz studies the divine metaphors in the book as a whole. All four of these studies contribute to the discussion on metaphor, but none of them deal with the metaphors’ cognitive and conceptual aspects nor the effects the metaphors have on readers and the contemporary world.

Studies on the book of Hosea produce some of the most engaging work on metaphor thus far. Susan Haddox considers metaphor and masculinity in Hosea (Haddox 2011). She applies masculinity theory to show that Hosea’s audience is mostly composed of elite males with a strong masculine social persona. Haddox views the rhetoric of the book as an attack on the elite males’ masculinity. Even though her work makes an important contribu-

tion, it does not deal with metaphor as a concept. Additionally, her specific attention to masculinity keeps the male central to the Minor Prophets.

Different from the study done by Susan Haddox, the work of Marie-Theres Wacker looks at the book of Hosea from a feminist perspective (Wacker 2012). In particular, she considers the “God as mother” metaphor in Hos 11. After critiquing the thought of Helen Schüngel-Straumann who revived the gynocentric speech about God (Schüngel-Straumann 1986), Wacker concludes that “the text does not present YHWH unalloyed in a feminine-motherly form; rather, it shows a divine figure with the two dimensions of anger, ready to destroy, and compassion.” She sees the “asymmetry of the contrast between ‘warrior’ and ‘mother’” as a “warning against constructing a gender ontology that has women to be motherly and men more anger-prone by nature” (Wacker 2012, 381–382). For Wacker, the God as mother metaphor is not one that speaks solely of divine care and compassion.

Other scholars working on the book of Hosea discuss metaphors drawn from the family domain. Hosea 1–3 and the so-called marriage metaphor take center stage. Looking at these prophetic chapters from an historical critical perspective, Ehud Ben Zvi (Ben Zvi 2004) focuses on the writers who shaped this text and how the marriage metaphor worked for them. According to Ben Zvi, a group of male Israelite literati wrote (p. 90) Hosea. From their perspective, the marriage metaphor helped them express and communicate the nature and story of their relationship with YHWH. Ben Zvi insightfully states that the metaphor brings to the forefront many of the literati’s “construction of themselves as Israel and their story about themselves” (Ben Zvi 2004, 383). His reading of the poetry and its relationship to the thought and world of the perceived authors lends credence to Jindo’s argument that the phenomenon of metaphor does expose the mindset of language users.

Several other Bible scholars use still different interpretive methods in their examination of Hos 1–3. Some interpretations bring to light YHWH as an abusive husband, underscoring how the violent depiction justifies violence against women (Keefe 2001; Sherwood 1995, 1996; Hornsby 1999; Baumann 2003; O’Brien 2008). Political and economic interpretations focus primarily on how the “marriage” metaphor functioned in ancient Israel (Dearman 1999; Hendricks 1982; Kelle 2009; Connolly 1998; Yee 2003, 2012).

In addition to work on Hos 1–3, several feminist Bible scholars explore other books within the Twelve. These scholars read selected texts “against the grain” to show how various metaphors reflect and contribute to kyriarchy, gender discrimination, sexism, exclusion, marginalization, male power, control over women, and misogyny. In her work *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor*, feminist biblical scholar Julia M. O’Brien (2008) deals with the God metaphors in the Minor Prophets. According to O’Brien, the metaphors depict God as an abusive husband (Hos 1–3), an authoritarian father (Mal 2:3), and angry warrior (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Hab 3, Zeph 3:17). Metaphors used for Jerusalem, particularly Daughter Zion metaphors in Mic 4–5, Zephaniah, and Zechariah, portray Jerusalem as a defenseless daughter. For O’Brien, cities portrayed as daughters are powerful metaphors because

> they communicate, clearly and effectively, that the safety of a city, like that of a daughter, is precarious, tenuous; Jerusalem, like a daughter, faces sure destruction when, either by choice or through divine punishment, it loses the protection of its patron. But as in the case of other prophetic comparisons, the same features that make the metaphor compelling also cause the most difficulty for readers. (O'Brien 2008, 142)

O'Brien's multifaceted critique of the daughter metaphor is substantive but could be pushed further. A city is compared to a woman. Can God punish, harm, and even destroy women? The metaphor leaves open the possibility. The fact that Jerusalem could lose the protection of its "patron," with God being portrayed as a male deity, indicates a patriarchal and hierarchical household where a household's male keeps women as "kept women." In my view, the metaphor contributes negatively to the understanding of familial relationships. It reinforces male hegemony, male dominance, and male control in addition to sanctioning male abuse, especially fathers toward daughters. Carleen Mandolfo's provocative work has Daughter Zion talk back to the prophets and talk back she must (Mandolfo 2007). O'Brien's study of the God metaphors, however, keeps the (p. 91) God question in sharp view. How the biblical writers conceptualize God through metaphors and how these metaphors continue to impact people's imaginations, belief systems, and understanding of the human–divine relationship needs much more thought since these metaphors reflect human characteristics projected onto the Divine.

Moving out of the androcentric, anthropocentric, androtheistic realm and familial domain, other scholars focus on natural world metaphors to showcase human social injustice. The work of Jack P. Lewis (Lewis 1996) provides a catalogue of these types of metaphors. Israel is a trained heifer (Hos 10:11), a wild ass (Hos 8:9), a vine (Hos 10:1; 14:7; [Heb. 14:8]), and standing grain (Hos 8:7b). Farming, sowing, and harvest metaphors describe Israel's wicked actions, the outcomes of the actions, and the resultant coming judgment and consequences that will occur because of such actions (Hos 10:13; 8:7; 6:11).

One metaphor from the natural world that scholars often interpret as a denigration and chastisement of the elite women of Samaria is the cows of Bashan metaphor in Amos 4:1–3. For Terence Kleven (1996), comparing the elite Samarian women to pedigreed cows suggests that

> these women, along with those able-bodied enough to serve as slaves or as leaders of the nation, are to be led away in a pitiful procession to exile, with rings in their noses, or hooks in their foreheads. They will go single file, like cattle, through a breach which an enemy has made in the walls of their defenses. (Kleven 1996, 226)

Kleven makes the further assertion that "the women of Samaria, and the men whom they have enslaved as companions, will be led out into exile and an unknown future as prisoners of war" (Kleven 1996, 226). He assumes that "Amos is astutely aware of the subtle control exercised by those women of Samaria and of the exploitation they have been

causing” (Kleven 1996, 226). Kleven’s misogynist reading of the metaphor fails to take into account that female characters are portrayed by and through a male lens and perspective. Kleven’s reading of the metaphor essentializes women of means, a view further exacerbated by his assumption to know the mind of Amos with regard to these women (see also E. O. Nwaoru 2009).

Brian Irwin (2012) interprets the metaphor differently. He explains that in comparing women to cows, most interpreters overlook the association of bovine imagery with the beauty embodied by the Egyptian goddess Hathor. His interpretation, however, eventually aligns with Kleven’s views. Irwin argues that

> Amos 4:1 is not a simple condemnation of women stepping outside of culturally defined gender roles, as some biblical literalists might argue. What the women of Samaria were condemned for is not that they asked others to serve them but that they were intentional in seeking to destroy the mechanism by which the poor and vulnerable were understood to be protected by their society. (Irwin 2012, 246)

Underlying Irwin’s interpretation of the metaphor is the sentiment that women are responsible for undermining the patriarchal social structures in place. Like Kleven, (p. 92) Irwin fails to acknowledge that the metaphor itself is a literary construct that places blame on a particular class of women for the collapse of social justice when in fact the elite males are the ruling class in power in the northern kingdom of Israel. They are the ones who oppress the poor and crush the needy, not the women, but ultimately greed is the driving force that leads to the oppression of all in a society.

In sum, scholars working in the area of metaphor and the Minor Prophets explore the cultural aspects and impact of various metaphors. The focus is primarily on androcentric and anthropocentric metaphors, inclusive of how such metaphors are used to depict the Divine anthropomorphically. The metaphors from the natural world serve to make a statement about human beings, and thus, the focus in text and interpretation is also androcentric and anthropocentric. With the exception of some feminist scholars like O’Brien, Sherwood, Keefe, and others, most scholars do not consider the impact that metaphors in the Minor Prophets have on contemporary readers in today’s globalized world. In a time when the intersection between geopolitics and religious belief is becoming increasingly stronger in many parts of the contemporary world, this lacuna in the discussion is particularly striking, especially with regard to the metaphors for the Divine. Many feminist and cultural studies scholars who read and interpret metaphors against the grain of the text demonstrate that the attitudes that shaped metaphors in the past are very much alive today. Other scholars who study the function of metaphors in the text and in “ancient Israel” keep the metaphors encased in the past as they offer historical critical readings and interpretations without any cultural, theological, or conceptual hermeneutical assessment. Metaphors like the cows of Bashan seem “dead” but for those who read the Bible literally, metaphors take on new life to foster and support classism, gender discrimination, and a whole host of other unjust attitudes. Hence, the metaphors of the Minor Prophets are alive today attitudinally more than, perhaps, figuratively. Furthermore, de-

spite the recent work on metaphor in the Minor Prophets, none of the Bible scholars use the newest cognitive linguistic and conceptual metaphor theory employed earlier by Jindo, DesCamp, and Sweetser. Yet two Bible scholars who use the new theory in their readings of Nahum are Karolien Vermeulen and Wilhelm J. Wessels. Their work is the topic of the next section.

Cities as Bodies? Humans as Lions?

In her study on Nah 2–3, Karolien Vermeulen (Vermeulen 2017) discusses the conceptual metaphor of the city as human body. She sees the metaphor as the connecting agent for all the other figures of speech and the actual mention of body parts featured in the book as a whole. For Vermeulen, the metaphorical image of Nineveh as a "body" is like a human body that holds all the human parts together.

Vermeulen begins her study with a discussion of specific figures of speech associated with the image of the city. These literary elements include metonymy, personification, (p. 93) metaphor, simile, and allusions to actual body parts. Her analysis of these figures of speech leads her to conclude that all of the literary features have "one element in common: the idea of Nineveh as a physical body. Or otherwise put, they draw on the conceptual metaphor NINEVEH IS A BODY" (Vermeulen 2017, 14). She argues further that

> For the proposed metaphor, the abstract target domain of the city is connected with the concrete source domain of the body. In the blend, the city shows both characteristics of the source and target domain: she has fortresses (Nah 3:12), but also dashed children (Nah 3:10); her palace is flooded (Nah 2:7), but she is also a violated prostitute (Nah 3:4–5). In this blend, the city with its walls and gates is a body moving through space, once strong and healthy, now attacked, wounded and bereaved. … The conceptual metaphor does not map the parts of the body to the parts of the city, but centers around movement and actions affecting the body, such as comforting and (mostly) physical violence. (Vermeulen 2017, 14–15)

Vermeulen asks two important questions: "But why should one want to present Nineveh as a body? What does the image do for the meaning-making process of a reader of Nah 2–3?" (Vermeulen 2017, 15). In responding to these questions, she states that "both cognitive-linguistic and critical-spatial research emphasize that human beings experience and understand the world through their bodies (Vermeulen 2017, 15). She points out that for cognitive-linguistic research, language and cognition are embodied; for critical-spatial research, "bodily experience plays a role in the social aspect of space, the so-called lived space" (Vermeulen 2017, 16). Thus, understanding Nineveh as a metaphorical body "not only bridges the gap between city and reader, but also creates an emotional response to the story of the city body" (Vermeulen 2017, 17). Vermneulen concludes that the metaphor "draws the far away near and renders the foreign familiar so that the reader can fully experience the death of the villain Nineveh" (Vermeulen 2017, 17).

Vermeulen's study certainly embraces the newest approach to metaphor and makes a substantial contribution, but her conclusion represents thought that reads "with the text" and thus foregoes presenting a deeper response that could be evoked in readers when the gendered nature of the city is brought to light. The metaphor compares a concrete city (bricks and mortar) to human beings (living entities). The city experiences tremendous violence to the point of total devastation devoid of any human compassion or comfort (Nah 3). The fact that Nineveh is portrayed as a female exacerbates the inherent violence of the metaphor. A city, referenced as a female human being, is guilty of sin and thus deserving of total destruction. If the purpose of cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory is to reveal the mindset of language users as Jindo asserts, then this metaphor of Nineveh as a body with all its associated figurative language does its job: it exposes the mindset of language users who shaped the biblical story of Nineveh, and the underlying misogynist attitudes that shaped this metaphor are alive and well today and continue to shape culture, behavior, and attitudes today. Thus, the emotion that one should feel is not joy over the death of "villain Nineveh" (Vermeulen 2017, 17) but anger and outrage that the metaphor is gendered, a point that Vermeulen completely (p. 94) misses. The conceptual metaphorical image of Nineveh as a human body may function as a figure of speech within the text, but the metaphor is not transformative for either readers or global cultures today as cities continue to be bombed, an action initiated by and in response to male hegemonic power. Is not this the case with Nineveh whose gendered language serves as a deflection from male hegemony? Nineveh is not the "villain"; Nineveh is the casualty of war. Nineveh is also the subject of brutal sexual assault, another dimension of the gendered body metaphor that Wilda C. M. Gafney so vividly brings to light (Gafney 2017, 45–59).

Another Bible scholar who uses cognitive linguistic and conceptual metaphor theory is Wilhelm J. Wessels. His study on Nah 2:12–14 highlights the lion metaphor. He uses it to bolster the argument that Nahum should be read as a form of "resistance poetry" against the forces of power and oppression (Wessels 2014, 705). Wessels describes vividly the "lion family" in Nahum, a family that consists of a male lion, a lioness, young lions, and an unweaned cub. The male lion kills at will and provides food for all who depend on him and who could benefit from his dominance and power. The fearsome, powerful, and crude male lion depicts an Assyrian king who uses unbridled and unmatched brutality to exploit Israelite people. Into the arena of this cognitive metaphor comes YHWH, who intervenes for the suffering people. The powerful lion-king and all associated with him, namely, the lioness-queen, the lion-king's officials (children), his military personnel, and by extension Assyria as a whole, are rendered powerless by the sovereign power of YHWH, the "true" power. Wessels concludes that the lion metaphor has the power to capture people's imagination and "effect change in people's minds and attitudes" (Wessels 2014, 719). For Wessels, Nah 2:2–14b is an excellent example of how reversal of the implied meaning of a metaphor is used mockingly to subvert the power of an oppressing enemy (Wessels 2014, 719).

Wessels depicts the lion metaphor in a positive light, and as such, he offers no comment on the point that when associated with human beings, the lion "pride" supports heteronormativity. Wessels also fails to draw out another mindset embedded in this lion metaphor, namely, that human beings feel they have the right to use the natural and powerful actions of nonhuman beings to make a negative statement about human beings and thus create a negative sentiment toward another earthly creature. A lion hunts and tears to pieces prey for food and often shares it with the pride. What is natural to a lion is viewed negatively because of the lion–human comparison. The natural instincts and ways of the animal are equated with unjust human oppression. The metaphor structure and its underlying human thought process that created it speaks of a deep sense of hierarchy in nature. The metaphor dehumanizes the human and vilifies the nonhuman. Furthermore, the image of a male deity having "power over" the male lion—the male human being—speaks of one male subverting the power of another male through violence. The male deity is just as violent as the male lion. One male emasculates another male. Hegemonic male power dominates and destroys unjustly and in the name of justice. And in the case of the all-powerful, victorious deity, the acts are affirmed and celebrated. Should not this metaphorical language be an inspiration to global male (p. 95) leaders today in their quest for "power over," and especially for those who, from a particular religious persuasion or inclination, read and interpret the text and its metaphors literally and fundamentally? Like the city as body metaphor, the lion metaphor is not transformative. It exposes the mindset of language users which, in this case, bespeaks a belief in domination and violence to deal with violence. Finally, this lion metaphor can instill fear of the deity in human beings, reinforce their sense of superiority, or embolden them in the belief that "might is right," in which case, readers could classify the book as poetry to be resisted.

What, then, can be said further about the metaphors featured in the Minor Prophets? How are readers to understand them in relation to the Divine today since the metaphorical language for the deity plays such a prominent role in the poetry of the Minor Prophets? Is the metaphorical language for the Divine prophetic and, if so, what does it expose and illuminate? The conclusion assesses the study of metaphor in the Minor Prophets, suggesting a path forward for twenty-first-century biblical readers.

Grounding Prophetic Metaphors in the Twenty-First Century: Concluding Comments

Viewed as a secular text by some readers and a sacred text by others, the Bible is, to date, the most read book in the world with about 3.9 billion copies sold throughout the past fifty years. Texts from the Bible's book of the Prophets are often quoted in speeches and used to form tenets for and statements about justice. As a body of literature, the Bible is highly imaginative, artistic, and deeply provocative. It is not merely an historical artifact or a classic work of ancient literature whose home is on the shelf or bookcase of scholars and students. The Bible, as we know it, is a cultural document and a political artifact that has been shaped by many peoples' political, social, economic, and theological

perspectives and worldviews. Thus, the Bible reflects culture and continues to influence culture today.

As a literary work, the Bible contains many literary techniques and figures of speech such as metaphor. Metaphor and metaphor theory have engaged thinkers for centuries, and scholars have made new inroads into understanding how metaphors can affect a person's imagination, behavior, and even belief system. This study has brought to light some of the most compelling yet disruptive metaphors contained in the Minor Prophets. People are compared to cities and lions; the Divine is given the character and role of a deity who becomes a warrior and an abusive husband who batters and hedges up "his wife." The metaphors are often harsh and devastating. The metaphors of the Minor Prophets reflect the culture of biblical times. Many of the metaphors discussed in this essay and the behaviors that are associated with them are still operative in today's (p. 96) twenty-first-century world. Metaphors such as the ones found in the Minor Prophets provide a window into human behavior, past and present, and have subtle and overt effects on the human imagination, the human psyche, and human behavior especially for believing communities and political, social, and religious leaders, the most of whom are male.

In the twenty-first century, xenophobia, homophobia, racism, ethnocentrism, gender discrimination, militarism, neoliberalism, colonialism, imperialism, authoritarianism, kyriarchy, hegemony, and the colonization of people's hearts and living conditions are increasing, together with a growing evangelical fundamentalism, on the one hand, and a growing secularism, on the other hand. The evangelical fundamentalist approach to reading the Bible adopted by the evangelical Christian right and the Catholic right turns the Minor Prophets' biblical metaphors into biblical literalism so that the metaphors point the way to how people, especially males, should act literally. If the male God is a warrior God, then might is right in the pursuit of justice. But justice for whom and from whose perspective? Hence, the way some faith traditions interpret biblical texts has often led to many forms of global oppression today.

For decades and even today, Hebrew Bible scholars have focused their work on how metaphor functions in the literature of the Prophets and, as this essay points demonstrates, in the texts of the Minor Prophets. Hebrew Bible scholars have had little regard for the conceptual understanding of metaphor, and many interpreters who work in metaphor theory do not usually focus on how metaphor affects readers. The text-bound, text-fetished approach to metaphors may be scholarly and academic, but it examines only how metaphors affect "the meaning" of a given text. Clearly, this approach is rooted in historical criticism, allowing Bible scholars to remain separated from the concerns and issues of ordinary readers.

Given present-day circumstances, Hebrew Bible scholars working in the area of the Prophets in general and the Minor Prophets in particular ought not to explore metaphors divorced from the globalized world. The starting point for all interpretation can no longer be the text but the contemporary world in which the Minor Prophets are read today. Furthermore, the Minor Prophets and their interpretations have to be assessed through the

lens of contemporary hermeneutical approaches that will expose power dynamics and unjust attitudes. Additionally, Hebrew Bible scholars and theologians working with the Bible and the Bible's metaphorical language and its interpretation by Bible scholars can no longer read "with the text." The call of feminist scholars to interrogate the text and read "against the grain" needs to be embraced if twenty-first-century Bible scholars want to aid in *decolonizing* and thus liberating people's hearts and material living conditions that have been colonized by so many of the androcentric, anthropocentric, androtheistic, monotheistic, hegemonic metaphors of the Minor Prophets.

People living in this globalized twenty-first-century world who may be ordinary readers and hearers of the Bible know of the world's injustices and may even experience injustice themselves. Bible scholars can no longer only focus on the world behind the (p. 97) text or the world of the text. Radical new and transformative ideas, along with a deconstructive lens for both text and culture, must be shared and implemented for the sake of justice and the liberation of all creation.

Within our twenty-first-century world, another phenomenon is also occurring besides the many injustices cited and the rise of biblical literalism. Of the people who invested in the purchase of one of the 3.9 billion copies of the Bible sold in the past fifty years, many Bible readers search for a connection to the Divine, hoping to find that connection in the Prophets whose texts often begin with "The word of the Lord came to me." Others who never read the Bible or dismissed it as irrelevant chose other paths to connect with the Divine. For example, two billion people practice Yoga, a physical, mental, and spiritual practice that originated in India and is currently practiced in various forms around the world. Other people practice Reiki, which dates back to the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries and the teachings of a Japanese monk named Mikao Usui. Reiki practitioners believe that energy emanates from every living thing. To increase the flow of one's life energy and promote that state of balance, Reiki practitioners serve as sources of renewed energy, passing it from their body, through their palms, to another living being. With the closing of the gap between religion and science in the twenty-first century, the understanding of the physical world and the spiritual world as "one world" is evolving with the realization that at the center of all is energy. Quantum physics is showing that everything in the universe is energy and electrical currents. Thus, the thought of Sandra Schneiders, who argues that the "God question" is the question for the twenty-first century, bears weight and has profound implications for how people understand and live life on the planet.

For the Bible to have relevance in this twenty-first-century globalized world, Bible scholars need to embrace an interdisciplinary approach to their work and to grow in openness to the conversations occurring in interreligious dialogue, in science, in comparative spirituality, and among indigenous peoples of all faiths and no faith, and among people who are secular, all of whom point to ways to connect with and experience the Divine that is beyond the Bible's androtheist and monotheist metaphors.

Scientists maintain that positive energy is at the heart of all that exists. Energy is the one thing that the entire cosmos has in common. Energy has the potential and power to be transformative. With respect to the Divine, perhaps a new metaphor for the deity that needs further exploration is “Holy Energy,” a metaphor that speaks of embodiment. Surprisingly, readers receive a glimpse of this Holy Energy within the Minor Prophets where texts depict the deity’s glory, the brightness of which is compared to the sun (Hab 3:3–4), and which in the Major Prophets fills the whole earth (Isa 6:3). Alongside of deconstructing the biblical text, scholars need to recover, rediscover, and embrace the mystical tradition that is attuned to energy alive in the cosmos. Perhaps then, through the encounter with this new way of communicating the Divine, poets and scholars and ordinary readers will give birth to new metaphors and new ways of seeing and living life in a world whose insatiable hunger for justice and peace is felt most acutely on the margins.

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God in the Book of the Twelve

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay considers the nature and character of God in the Twelve. To do so requires one to extrapolate assumptions about God on multiple levels: individual units, thematic developments, and modes of speech. When these elements are evaluated within the individual books and across the Book of the Twelve as a curated collection, a portrait of YHWH's actions and motives develops that highlights YHWH's covenantal expectations across time (from the eighth century to the Persian period) and for the future (a Day of YHWH still to come). The resulting portrait has a didactic purpose designed both to warn Jerusalem's cultic elite of their responsibility and to admonish the people of YHWH to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Keywords: Keywords: characterization, chronology, covenant, cult, God, judgment, mercy, YHWH

(p. 103) NEITHER prophetic literature in general nor the Twelve as a scroll articulates systematic treatises defining the nature and character of God. The discourse in prophetic texts instead presents the *speech* of YHWH to prophets, YHWH's people, leaders, and foreign nations. These speeches are recorded within collections named for twelve different prophetic figures, most appearing in a loose chronological order that runs from the eighth century BCE into the Persian period (539–332 BCE). Both the individual books and the collection of the Twelve as a whole inform the portrait of YHWH that unfolds within and among the scroll known as the Twelve Prophets.

Any attempt to analyze the character of God must do so by extracting explicit statements and implicit assumptions that are embedded within the texts. Such a task offers a monumental challenge and is fraught with no small degree of risk. Risks include selectivity necessary for an essay of this size, as well as intentional and unintentional assumptions on the part of the author, editor, and readers of this essay.

Recognizing these dangers, four explicit assumptions may ameliorate some of the potential ambiguity. First, in accepting the task of describing "God" in the Twelve, I understand my task to be primarily descriptive and synthetic. I shall attempt to draw together a num-

ber of characteristics and qualities that recur in and among the Twelve. Relatedly, I assume here that such a task must of necessity treat God as one character among others in the rhetorical interplay that comprises the wide variety of forms within prophetic literature. Third, I do not understand my task to consider the means by which theological interpreters could or should affirm or confront the theological portraits of God for twenty-first-century communities of faith. Finally, while I have written extensively on questions concerning editorial activity that I believe has taken place (through the use of citations, echoes, catchwords, shaping, and sequence) to invite one to read the scroll of the Twelve from Hosea to Malachi, I will largely avoid such issues in this essay. I will comment instead upon the interrelationships of the characteristics and qualities of God within and among the Twelve as the necessary starting point for putting such portraits into dialogue with one another.

(p. 104) Methodological Considerations

Given the sparsity of explicit descriptive statements about God, one has to extract a portrait of God by assessing the literary forms comprising the books, recognizing the individual units, thematic constellations, diachronic dilemmas, and modes of speech appearing therein.

Literary Parameters of Speeches and Transitions

Determining where individual speeches start and stop is important but difficult. In some books, certain clues (refrains, introductory formulas, editorial transitions) make this task easier than others. For example, the refrain “for three transgressions and for four against ‘X,’ I will not turn it back” begins each new oracle in the oracles against the nations (OAN) in Amos (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). While the introductory formula signals a new object of YHWH’s wrath, the repetition also compels the reader to relate the individual oracles to one another in a surprising manner. The individual oracles convey meaning on their own, but the collection reaches a climactic point when the last two refrains introduce YHWH’s judgment against YHWH’s own people (2:4, 6).

In Amos 4:6–12, the refrain “yet you did not return to me, utterance of YHWH” appears five times and serves a climactic rhetorical purpose. The repetition does not serve to separate oracles as in Amos 1–2 but to highlight the sequence of divine actions designed to try and bring Israel back to YHWH. Unlike the refrain of the OAN, the climax does not have a surprise ending but concludes with YHWH’s pronouncement that judgment is coming. The refrain thus serves to document and emphasize YHWH’s numerous failed attempts to get Israel to change its ways. On the one hand, the refrain underscores the rhetorical point that YHWH has no choice but to destroy Israel if any accountability exists in the covenant relationship. On the other hand, the refrain emphasizes something significant about the portrait of God in the Twelve: YHWH’s judgment is anything but capricious. Amos 4:6–12 articulates the end of YHWH’s patience comes only after numerous attempts to challenge a people who continually refuse to return.

Textual clues in Joel 1 mark shifts from one speech to another yet also suggest that the speeches are intended to be read together. The chapter contains a series of vocatives addressed to different groups, including elders (1:2), drunkards (1:5), farmers (1:11), vintners (1:11), priests (1:13, 14), and an unnamed feminine entity (1:8). The prophet also recounts an intercessory prayer spoken directly to YHWH (1:19–20). All of these signals presuppose ongoing judgment but also *anticipate* an imminent and even greater threat: the coming day of YHWH directed against Judah (1:15; 2:1). Nowhere does the prophet tell these groups what they have done to provoke YHWH's current judgment, forcing the reader to determine the cause of the punishment.[1] Moreover, the punishments that have begun differ from one another, including a series of locust plagues (p. 105) (1:4), a military attack (1:6), a drought (1:10–12, 17–18), and wildfire (1:19–20).Without a cause provided for YHWH's judgment, Joel's portrait of YHWH has been interpreted as rather capricious or remote (Crenshaw 1995, 39–43). Assuming a cause for the judgment requires the reader to presuppose knowledge on the part of the people (or readers) that is not stated.[2]

The relationship of one speech to another can be unclear. Speeches can be independent of those on either side (Amos 3–6) or changes of speakers can carry on an extended dialogue (Mic 7:8–20). Speeches can be chained together stylistically (five visions reports in Amos 7:1–3, 4–6, 7–9; 8:1–3; 9:1–4; the eight night visions in Zech 1–6) or chronologically (date formulas in Hag 1:1, 15; 2:1; 10, 20 and Zech 1:1, 6; 6:1) or other sequential statements (Joel 2:18; 3:1; 4:1 [Heb. 2:18, 28; 3:1]). In such cases, the message unfolds gradually, affecting the resulting portrait of YHWH.

Finally, the portrait of YHWH must be determined in the context of the entire book. Joel and Habakkuk offer a concluding message that reverses (or promises to reverse) the situation in other parts of the book, as in the case the threats of Joel 1:2–2:17 and the promises in 2:18–4:21. Haggai, Zech 1–8, and Jonah unfold as a narrative sequence so that the end of the book illuminates the narrator's understanding of the first chapter in significant ways. Joel, Obadiah, Zechariah, and Malachi end by anticipating eschatological scenarios in the (immediate or distant) future.

The twelve writings are ultimately intended to be read together. Following a rough chronological order that moves from the eighth century to the Persian period, they include prophetic speeches about the Northern Kingdom (especially in Hosea and Amos) and the Southern Kingdom (especially in Micah and Zephaniah) and comment upon the downfall of Assyria and the ascendancy of Babylon (Nahum and Habakkuk, respectively). Questions of how this collection of twelve writings intends to be heard have a bearing upon the image of God one develops.

Thematic Constellations

Any attempt to describe the character of God in the Twelve must wrestle with the fact that YHWH does not have a consistent message. Hosea 1 opens the Book of the Twelve with prophetic birth announcements in which three children first symbolize a message of judgment against Israel (Hos 1:2–5, 6–7, 8–9) before each child's name is reversed to be-

come a symbol of restoration for Judah and Israel (1:10–2:1 [Heb. 2:1–3]). Micah similarly vacillates between judgment and hope for Judah and Jerusalem but presumes that the destruction of Samaria lies in the past (1:5–7). Amos and Zephaniah begin with only words of judgment but contain words of promise at the end (Amos 9:7–10; 11–12, 4–15; 9:13; Zeph 3:9–20). This vacillation of judgment and promise creates a theological justification for the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem in the eighth and sixth centuries: YHWH repeatedly sent prophets to warn the people of what was coming if they did not change.

(p. 106) Larger sections of text seem to have been independent compositions, though some may contain material from different times and may function as anthologies of short sayings (e.g., Hos 4–14; Amos 3–6; Mic 1–3; Zech 7–8). Determining the portrait of YHWH in these extended passages requires recognition of both the parts and the whole. For example, the OAN of Amos 1–2 articulate judgment against foreign nations individually but climax as an extended composition by using the same refrain (“for three transgressions and for four”) to pronounce judgment against YHWH’s own people. The composition thus claims YHWH’s power over all peoples, but the primary focus is a Judean audience.

Diachronic Dilemmas

Most of the prophetic collections in the Twelve represent more than one single composition, and some of the collections appear to have been updated over a considerable time period, posing diachronic dilemmas for describing the character of God.

For example, most of Amos anticipates radical judgment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The hope in 9:11–15, by contrast, presents three distinct promises: (1) Amos 9:14–15 offers a word of restoration for “my people Israel” wherein the cities will be rebuilt, reinhabited, and recultivated; (2) Amos 9:11–12 is a Judean hope for reunifying the kingdom politically (rebuilding the fallen booth of David and repossessing the surrounding lands that had formerly belonged to the Davidic kingdom); (3) Amos 9:13 is an eschatological message about the land’s supra-abundant production of grain and wine. This promise supersedes the promise of recultivation in 9:15, making the latter appear quite anticlimactic. This eschatological promise in 9:13 contains the same wording as Joel 4:18 (“the mountains shall drip with sweet wine”), a text where the eschatological perspective is more at home. Hence, Amos 9:11–15 contains three distinct promises that make political, agricultural, and eschatological claims regarding YHWH’s restoration. Whose portrait takes precedence in describing the picture of God in the book of Amos?

The Mode of Speeches in Prophetic Books

In prophetic texts God may function as speaker, addressee, and/or object of a prophetic unit. In some texts, God speaks directly. When YHWH speaks directly to the people (e.g., Hos 2:1–2 [Heb. 2:3–4]; Amos 3:13–15; 4:4–12; Mic 6:9–16; Zeph 3:8–13), YHWH typically refers to himself using first-person verbs and pronouns. Such first-person references can also appear abruptly in the middle of a unit where the prophet predominately functions as speaker, making it hard to distinguish YHWH from the prophet in formal terms.

God more often delivers a message through and to prophetic figures who speak *for* God *to* the people. For example, Hab 2:4–20 contains a series of five woe oracles (see *hoy* (p. 107) in 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19) that refer to YHWH in the third person (Hab 2:13, 14, 16, 20). The prophet's authority to speak on behalf of the deity is conveyed through reference to the "word of YHWH" or the formula "utterance of YHWH" (*neum YHWH*). The prophet appears implicitly as YHWH's messenger.

YHWH is also the addressee in some units. The prophet may address God while acting as intercessor (e.g., Amos 7:1–3, 4–6; Joel 3:9–11 [Heb 3:9-11]) or as accuser (Hab 1:2–4; Jon 4). In such cases, YHWH frequently responds to the plea, albeit in various ways. For example, Hab 1:5–11 functions in its canonical position as a response to the prophetic complaint in 1:2–4, even though the plural verb forms indicate that 1:5–11 speaks to the people and not directly to the prophet using singular forms as one might expect. The prophet in 1:2–4 complains of the injustice perpetrated by Judeans against other Judeans. In "response," YHWH announces to the entire community (using plural verbs) that he intends to send the Babylonians to punish Judah. By contrast, in Jonah 4 the narrator recounts a dialogue in which the prophet essentially accuses YHWH of being too willing to show compassion (4:1–3).

YHWH directly addresses the prophet less often than one might suspect. YHWH's words are more likely recounted by the prophet-as-narrator or delivered as though YHWH is speaking directly to the people. YHWH also speaks about those whom YHWH intends to punish (using third-person references). In Zeph 1:2–18, for example, YHWH makes several proclamations but these verses do not have a formal addressee. YHWH proclaims that he will destroy all creation (1:2–3), followed by the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem because they turned away from following YHWH (1:4–6). He also mentions the royal family (1:7–8) and others, including those who live in the second quarter (1:10–11) and those who do not think YHWH will act at all (1:12–13). Finally, YHWH describes the effects of the coming day of YHWH (1:14–18).

Jonah represents an exception. A narrator recounts two episodes of the word of YHWH coming directly to Jonah (1:1–2; 2:1–2), but the prophet responds quite differently than one expects. In the first instance, the prophet flees (unsuccessfully) in the opposite direction that YHWH told him to go. Jonah obeys following the second word event but does so reluctantly. The dialogue that follows in chapter 4 recounts a debate between the prophet and YHWH. The character of Jonah does not wish YHWH to show grace to foreigners, but the narrator extrapolates YHWH's compassion as described in Exod 34:6–7 as a defining characteristic of YHWH's approach to all humanity. The result underscores the conviction of YHWH as a compassionate deity, while Jonah (and those who espouse the same theological convictions as Jonah) comes across as petulant, arrogant, and petty.

The prophets also condemn various leaders, relying upon the prophet's role as messenger speaking under YHWH's authority. One line of confrontation in the Book of the Four (Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah) condemns the priests of the Northern Kingdom (Hos 4:4–5:2; 6:9; 10:5; Amos 7:10–17). The actions of these priests threaten the people

of Israel (Hos 4:15; Amos 7:10–17). Another line condemns the priests of Judah for leading the people in false worship (Mic 3:11–12; Zeph (p. 108) 1:4; 3:4). In between (Mic 1:5–7, 9, 12), the prophet condemns Judah because it has followed the sins of Samaria (Mic 1:5) so that Samaria's wound has come to the gate of Jerusalem (1:9).

Joel emphasizes the failure of the priests in Jerusalem for allowing the purity of the land to be compromised. Joel 1:9–14 and 2:12–17 implicitly castigate the priests in Jerusalem for failing to maintain the temple offerings so that the "day of YHWH" threatens the land (Joel 1:15–18). This scenario leads the prophet to call upon the priests to initiate a communal festival of repentance (2:12–17). The priests in Haggai and Zechariah function positively as authoritative keepers of tradition in discussions leading to the rebuilding the temple (Hag 1:12; 2:4, 11–13) and in staffing the temple (Zech 3:1, 8–9; 6:11–15). By contrast, the priests of Bethel and Samaria are not allowed to participate (Zech 7:1–3; 8:18–19). Finally, Mal 1:6–2:9 testifies to an intrapriestly debate that threatens to nullify the "covenant of Levi" (Mal 2:4, 8–9).

Explicit address is not the only way that the message to the priests takes shape. Near the end of Malachi, a "book of remembrance" is given to "those fearing YHWH…so that they will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between those serving God and those not serving him" (3:16, 18). This "book of remembrance" given to those fearing God thus allows this group to conduct the role of priest (to distinguish the righteous from the wicked and to serve YHWH properly). Relatedly, Zech 14:20–21 undercuts the unique role of the priests in the ideal future. This passage speaks of a coming day when the inscription on the bells of the horses in Jerusalem will read "holy to YHWH," a phrase normally reserved for the rosette on the turban of the chief priest (Exod 28:36; 39:30). Relatedly, the everyday cooking pots in Jerusalem will also be "holy to YHWH" (Zech 14:21). This passage embeds a subtle critique of the priesthood even as it democratizes the role of priest in the eschatological future by ascribing priestly characteristics to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

What do these embedded conversations concerning priests say about the character of God in and among the Twelve? First, while the critiques of priests include both the northern and southern territories, they primarily blame Jerusalem's priests for its destruction. This indicates YHWH's seriousness regarding covenant obligations. The failure of the priests to maintain the cult properly has consequences. The land will not produce its bounty sufficiently because the covenant curse instantiates itself when offerings are not given properly.[3] Second, the texts undergird the perception that YHWH is a jealous God who expects undivided loyalty (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9). From the beginning of the Twelve (Hos 2), YHWH's expectation of covenant loyalty colors the message of the entire scroll. Third, the democratization of the priesthood in Zech 14:20–21 extends the view that YHWH's people shall function as a nation of priests. While such a view is expressed relatively infrequently within the Hebrew Bible (Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6), its inclusion in the last two verses of Zechariah makes an emphatic statement. YHWH has a special plan for Jerusalem and Judah in the ideal future.

(p. 109) Metaphors and Other Conceptual Images

Concepts of God are embedded in metaphors and foundational presuppositions in the Twelve. God speaks as one with power and authority, as cosmic king, as one who expects obedience, as judge/prosecuting attorney, and as spouse/father. Just as kings act as leaders of the army, so YHWH acts as king and divine warrior (Joel 2; Zeph 3; Nah 1; Hab 3; Zeph 3:14–17). Sometimes texts depict YHWH as head of a heavenly army that attacks YHWH's own people (Joel 2:1–11), while at other times YHWH attacks nations (Zech 12; 14). Sometimes YHWH acts as the military defender of the land (Zeph 3:14–17; Zech 9), whether the text explicitly mentions an army or not. In part, this model derives from ancient Near Eastern traditions that predate the foundation of Israel, even though Israel's prophetic traditions are unique in longevity of their curation process and their challenge to royal figures (Nissinen 2017, 144–167).

Closely related to metaphors of YHWH as king are texts in which YHWH acts as judge and prosecuting attorney (e.g., Joel 4:11–14; Mic 6:1–16). Micah 6 presents a trial speech (*rib*) in which YHWH contends with the people (6:3), recalling his beneficence (6:4–5) and laying out the case against them (6:9–12) before announcing the verdict (6:13–16). At issue here, as elsewhere, is the failure of YHWH's people to offer sacrifices appropriately (6:6–8) and their inability to act with integrity toward one another (6:9–12). Micah 6 also reiterates the reason for judgment because Judeans have followed the statutes of the Northern Kingdom rather than YHWH (see the reference to Omri and Ahab in 6:16; see also 1:5, 9, 12). Joel 4:11–14 constructs a different juridical scenario in which YHWH judges the nations and calls them to battle to hold them accountable. In this scenario, YHWH is both judge and leader of a divine army that will punish the surrounding nations that have taken advantage of Judah (Joel 3:1–3, 19, 21 [Heb. 4:1–3, 19, 21]).

Hosea 1–3 depicts YHWH as husband. Chapters 1 and 3 use symbolic act reports of the prophet marrying a promiscuous woman in order to create an analogy for comparing YHWH's relationship to Israel, but in Hos 2 YHWH marries the land personified (not Gomer as in chapter 1) and continues to take steps to convince her to return to him even though she has gone after other lovers. Because in the ancient world women who had affairs were condemned to expulsion or death,[4] YHWH's willingness to take back the wife who had betrayed their marital covenant was originally intended to shock readers into recognizing the depth of YHWH's commitment. Feminist critics have correctly problematized this extended metaphor since YHWH's threats and actions mirror those of abusive spouses. Verbal and physical abuse of spouses does not and should not communicate grace in today's world the way they were once intended by the author of Hosea 2. Hosea 2 also states that God's wife has produced children, though God does not claim the children (Hos 2:4–5 [Heb. 2:6–7]). YHWH initially rejects them because of the wife's (p. 110) promiscuity but ultimately promises to restore them as well (2:22–23 [Heb. 2:24–25]). The metaphor of YHWH's treatment of Jerusalem as his wife also appears in several texts that refer to Lady Zion explicitly (*bat siyon*, Mic 4:8–5:1 [Heb. 4:8–14]; Zeph 3:14–17; Zech 2:7–11 [Heb. 2:11–15]; and 9:9–11) or implicitly.[5]

Hosea 11:1–9 represents one of the most tender depictions of YHWH in the entire Hebrew Bible, describing God as a loving father whose son, Ephraim, has turned his back on him. YHWH decides that punishment must be delivered (11:5–7) but then offers a soliloquy full of pathos as YHWH struggles with the idea of punishing Ephraim. The text climaxes with YHWH changing his mind (Hos 11:8–9). The reprieve is short-lived, however, since the very next verses assume that Ephraim has again turned away from YHWH and must be punished (11:10–12:1).

Another conceptual framework in the Twelve is the assumption of YHWH as *creator* of the world. The doxologies in Amos (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) refer to YHWH's power as creator to underscore YHWH's ability to execute judgment he has threatened. These doxologies do not use the distinctive language of the Genesis creation accounts and may not presuppose those texts. By contrast, the allusions in Zeph 1:2–3 do presuppose the Priestly creation account in Gen 1:1–2:4 (DeRoche 1980). The created elements, however, appear in reverse order, emphatically placing the coming destruction of Jerusalem on a par with the creation of the world itself. This allusion is one of a series of allusions to Gen 1–11 that reverse their message.[6]

Some of the theophanic language within the Twelve refers to YHWH's power over the sea, evoking motifs from the ancient Near Eastern creation story. This story, in its various forms, presents the victorious deity as a powerful warrior whose victory over Yam and Nahar (Sea and River) result in the creation of the world as we know it. In the Twelve, this language appears in the theophanic hymns in Nah 1:4 and Hab 3:8, 15.

One also sees a softer side of YHWH in metaphors of YHWH as parent and teacher.

Both Hos 14:2–9 (Eng. 14:1–8) and Joel 2:12–17 use open-ended calls to repentance directed toward Ephraim and Judah, respectively. Both depict YHWH as a deity willing to take his people back should they return (*shub*) to him. Both calls to repent precede divine promises (Hos 14:5–9; Joel 2:18–27) describing how YHWH will respond positively *if* the people repent. Neither passage, however, definitively states that the people actually do repent, a fact that creates some ambiguity.[7] Read in isolation, one could perhaps read the promises (especially Joel 2:18–27) as having been fulfilled, but two other texts in the larger collection suggest the reader should not assume the people responded positively. Amos 4:6–12 provides a litany of divine actions designed to warn YHWH's people, but five times YHWH proclaims that the people "did not return (*shub*) to me" (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Given the chronological arrangement of the Twelve, one first encounters two invitations to return to YHWH (Hos 14, Joel 2), while the statements in Amos 4:6–12 imply that the people did not turn back (Schart 2007, 141–144).

Zechariah 1:2–6 marks a change (O'Brien 2007, 169–172). Like Amos 4:6–12, this passage states explicitly that YHWH's people rejected YHWH's earlier invitations to repent (Zech 1:2) and offers YHWH's people yet another chance to repent (1:3–5). This time, however, the prophet narrates a positive response (1:6), and the chronological frame of

(p. 111) Haggai and Zechariah dates this speech just weeks before the beginning of the temple reconstruction (Zech 1:1; Hag 2:1, 10).

Jonah 3–4 offers a powerful take on the portrait of YHWH in and among the Twelve, by endorsing a position that YHWH works salvifically among the nations and offers foreign peoples the same grace as YHWH's own people. When YHWH sees that the Ninevites have turned (*shub*) from their evil ways, YHWH changes YHWH's own mind about destroying them (3:10). YHWH's compassionate action toward Assyria angers Jonah to the point where Jonah would rather die than live with the knowledge that his speech saved Assyria (4:2). In the remainder of Jonah 4, YHWH attempts to teach Jonah to exhibit compassion, even toward foreigners, but Jonah never changes his attitude.

Given the likelihood that Jonah is a late composition among the Prophets, the portrait of YHWH in Jonah stands out as a minority position. Both within the Book of the Twelve (see especially Amos 1–2; Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zeph 2:4–15) and the OAN grouped together in the other prophetic scrolls (Isa 13–23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32), the vast majority of texts dealing with foreign nations pronounce judgment against those nations, usually under the assumption that they have acted violently toward Judah. The deliberate incorporation of the book of Jonah into the Twelve suggests that the tradents of the prophetic scrolls realized the need to include a theological affirmation of YHWH's willingness to deal positively with the nations. A few other texts articulating this openness to foreigners appear in each of the four scrolls, especially in Isaiah and the Twelve (Isa 2:2–4; 56:1–7; 66:19–21; Mic 4:2–4; Zech 8:20–23; Mal 1:11–14).

Malachi 3:16–19 portrays YHWH as a teacher who provides "those fearing YHWH" with a book of remembrance (3:18) that teaches them "how to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked" (3:18) (Nogalski 2016, 191–212). The image portrays YHWH responding to a group who feared YHWH and spoke with one another. YHWH's role as teacher also plays a major role in Mic 4:2–4, the text that marks the exact beginning of the second half of the Book of the Twelve. The centrality of the temple mount as the place from which YHWH dispenses instruction is closely associated with this thread.

Messages of the Individual Speeches, Books, and Scroll

In the Minor Prophets, YHWH speaks through twelve prophetic voices who take on YHWH's authority. By virtue of being named prophets, the figures in these books are assumed to convey YHWH's word to those whom they address. The message changes, however, depending upon the context and the thematic flow of the books. This vacillation complicates the picture of God within each book and across the Twelve.

The voice of Joel challenges the people to recognize the cause of the covenant curses (locust plagues, drought, and military attacks) that threaten the land's ability to provide (p. 112) the people with enough harvest to survive, which in turn threatens the priests'

ability to maintain order through proper offerings (Joel 1:13–14; 2:12–17). The prophet then challenges the priests to lead the people to repent in hopes that YHWH will change his mind, enabling the land to provide once again. In the second half of the book (beginning in 2:18), the prophetic admonitions give way to promises of restoration in which YHWH speaks directly (using first-person singular verbs and pronouns). While the two parts of the book (1:1–2:17; 2:18–3:21 [Heb 2:8-4:21]) likely did not originate as a single composition, Joel's parallel structure and editorial formulas suggest that those who included 2:18–3:21 (Heb 2:8-4:21) intended the second half to be read along with 1:1–2:17 as a series of increasingly grand divine promises that are contingent upon the community's repentance.

The vision reports of Zechariah and Amos use the same genre to offer very different messages. The five visions in Amos become increasingly threatening until the fifth vision announces the impending destruction of the altar of the Northern Kingdom. By contrast, the eight vision reports in Zech 1–6 anticipate the imminent restoration of Jerusalem, the reconstitution of the temple and its personnel, and the removal of wickedness from the land.

Jonah represents a complication to the normal prophetic function. When YHWH initially commands Jonah to deliver a message to Nineveh, Jonah takes off in the opposite direction, and YHWH must go to great lengths to compel Jonah to deliver the message. The prophet Jonah clearly functions against type as a prophet who resists YHWH, marking Jonah as an untrustworthy character when he speaks on his own accord. When Jonah reluctantly does deliver the message to the Ninevites, they immediately repent and turn to YHWH, indicating that YHWH's word has power even when delivered by a resistant prophet.

The literary, stylistic, and conceptual means by which the prophetic books convey God's character have wide-ranging implications. First, the messages conveyed by God to God's people are not consistent. God will send judgment and/or God promises grace. Judgment comes against God's own people and/or against hostile forces. God's grace comes to God's people and/or to their enemies. Second, God's conversation partners each must be assessed contextually. Prophets, priests, kings, people, Lady Zion, and foreign nations play different roles in different books and even in different parts of the same book. Third, extrapolating God's character from the prophetic texts involves at least as much assessment of implicit assumptions as it does listing explicit statements about YHWH.

The Meaning of YHWH in the Twelve

The God within and among the Twelve is characterized both by his acts and the motives for those actions. God's *actions* are of two primary types: exerting power and promising compassion. The most common supposition of prophetic materials is that the deity (p. 113) is utterly in control. YHWH punishes YHWH's own people when they turn away from him; controls other nations to inflict judgment (e.g., Hab 1:5–11); and leads a cosmic army (e.g., Joel 2:1–11; 3:9-13 [Heb 4:9–13]). YHWH even uses his own people to exert his

power over the land (e.g., Obad 19–20; Zech 9:13; 12:6–7; Amos 9:11–12) and at times intervenes directly, frequently utilizing elements of nature as his instruments (Amos 1:2; 7:1, 4; Jonah 1; Mic 1:3–4; Zech 14:3–4). Texts thus depict YHWH as a powerful God who will not fail. Periodic references to the power of YHWH as the creator of the world emphasize YHWH's power over creation and suggest YHWH has the power to execute judgment.

The texts also presuppose human freedom to act. If people deliberately choose to follow other gods or to turn away from YHWH, YHWH will respond with judgment. YHWH consistently acts to restore relationships when people turn to him (e.g., Joel 2:18–27; Zech 1:2–6; Mal 3:16–18) or continues with judgment when people choose not to repent (Amos 4:6–12; Zech 7:12–13; 8:14) or their repentance is not genuine (Hos 6:1–3 followed by 6:4–10).

Throughout, prophetic texts assume that YHWH prefers mercy over judgment. They repeatedly allude to Exod 34:6, highlighting YHWH's long-suffering compassion in order to depict YHWH as slow to anger and abounding in mercy (Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Mic 7:18–19).

The fact that almost every book in the Twelve ends with hope for a better future contributes to this sense that YHWH desires mercy over judgment. The chronological arrangement of the Twelve from the eighth century to the Persian period also demonstrates that YHWH has sustained this desire for compassion over time. Israel, Bethel, and Samaria are judged in the books with eighth-century settings (Hosea, Amos, Micah). The fate of the northern region reappears as a topic in Proto- and Deutero-Zechariah (Zech 7:2–3; 8:19; 9:11–13; 10:6–12; 11:7, 14). Judah and Jerusalem are threatened with judgment repeatedly, but the hope that is offered reflects a Jerusalemite teleology. Zion/Jerusalem will be restored (Joel 4:9–21; Amos 9:11–15; Zech 1:13–17; 14); it will become the place which YHWH defends (Amos 1:2; Zeph 3:14–17; Zech 9:1–10; 12:3–4, 6; 14:3), because it is YHWH's dwelling place.

The Twelve depict two primary *motives* for God's actions: the expectation for cultic and ethical propriety and protection for Israel, Judah, and the nations. In terms of expectations, the improper giving of gifts (especially to other deities) plays a significant role in Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah, and the people's failure to live in righteousness and fidelity elicits YHWH's judgment upon the people in these four books as well as Habakkuk (1:2–4). Restoration is offered only when these conditions are reversed in Haggai and Zechariah. The rebuilding of the temple requires new, purified ways of acting toward YHWH so that the new temple can be properly cleansed (Hag 2:10–14). Zechariah's sixth (5:1–4) and seventh (5:5–11) visions highlight the need for cultic purity and proper ethical behavior. The former mentions a curse that will befall anyone who swears falsely on YHWH's name, and the latter envisions removal of evil from the land.

(p. 114) YHWH also has expectations for the nations. While YHWH sends the Babylonians as punishment (Hab 1:5–11), YHWH will also punish Babylon because its brutality knows no bounds (Hab 1:11; 3:16). Amos complains that nations threaten each other in ways that cross lines of civility: Syria and the Ammonites commit war crimes (1:3, 13); the

Philistines and Tyre sent entire communities to Edom (1:6, 9); Moab desecrated the bones of the king of Edom (2:1); and Edom broke its alliance (1:10). At least some of these oracles, then, depict YHWH as one who dispenses justice among surrounding nations.

At times, YHWH acts because the nations threaten YHWH's reputation as the protector of Judah. A number of texts in the Twelve plead with YHWH to act (usually to cease punishing Judah) because the failure to do so would make YHWH appear weak to the nations by making a mockery of Judah (cf. Joel 2:17, 19; Mic 2:4; 6:16; Zeph 2:8; 3:18). The logic of these claims, sometimes in the mouth of the people and sometimes stated by YHWH directly, assumes that Judah's abasement (destruction of Jerusalem and the temple) would cast aspersions on its deity's ability to protect Judah from attack.

YHWH stands as a threat to any nation that positions itself as hostile to YHWH. Such sentiments can be stated explicitly (e.g., Nah 1:2; Hab 3:12–13), or they can be inferred from the context (Zeph 2:4–15). Recent assessments by Ben Zvi (1991, 298–306), Berlin (1994, 117–124), and Sweeney (2000, 514–518) convincingly argue that the nations mentioned in Zephaniah's oracles against the nations reflect a deliberate selection of nations who benefitted from Assyrian control of the region, but suffered at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (605–562 BCE).

Summation

To describe God in the Twelve, one must recognize the paradoxical and dynamic nature of YHWH's actions. God is merciful and mighty, wrathful and compassionate, jealous and forgiving, long-suffering and impatient, a warrior who seeks peace. One also must recognize the chronological scope and repetitive nature of the Twelve. The chronological structure for the collection that takes the reader of the Twelve from the eighth century to the Persian period creates a dynamic portrait of a deity who continues to work on behalf of people who repeatedly turn their backs on YHWH.

The scroll of the Twelve ends as it begins. The cultic and ritual shortcomings exhibited by the people and their leaders at the beginning of Hosea continue virtually all the way through the collection. At the end of Malachi, the people and their leaders continue to struggle with their cultic obligations and their ethical failings. God has not changed either. As portrayed in the Twelve, God demands accountability but does not abandon God's people. God initiates action to help God fearers discern what is right from what is wrong.

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Notes:

([1.]) Explanations abound. Many try to collapse the diverse images into a prophetic response to a single locust plague, interpreting the four locust names as stages of one or more species of locust. See the extensive summaries in Crenshaw (1995, 88–90) and Barton (2001, 11–13, 42–48). Others see the setting as a cultic ritual (Rudolph 1971, 23–24; Jeremias 2007, 5, 11, 18–20). Still others argue that Joel 1 represents a scribal literary collage that presumes that the accusations in Hosea are applied to Judah (Bergler 1988; Schart 1998, 261–278).

([2.]) Such knowledge has recently been suggested as grounded in the covenant curses (e.g., Stuart 1987, 232) and/or in the literary context of the Twelve (Nogalski 2015, 211–228).

([3.]) Hence, the threats of Joel 1 represent a composition in which the current generation essentially faces an aggregation of curses found in Deut 27–28.

([4.]) Women accused of sexual relations prior to marriage by their husbands had a higher burden of proof and the woman’s punishment was more severe (death of the woman, a fine for the man) if his accusations were “proven” true (Deut 22:13–21). While adultery was punished by death of both participants (Deut 22:22), a woman’s life could only be spared only if she could “prove” the act was rape, though the bar was high (Deut 22:23–27).

([5.]) For discussion of the concept of “Daughter Zion, see Fitzgerald (1972, 403–416); Schmitt (1985, 557–569); Biddle (1991, 173–194); and Maier (2008).

([6.]) Other texts in Gen 1–11 are reversed: Zeph 2:11–15 (the line of Ham in the table of nations material of Gen 10) and 3:8 (the tower of Babel in Gen 11). See Nogalski (2013, 1–23).

([7.]) See discussion of Hos 14:2–9 in Jeremias (1983, 169–174).

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Cult and Temple in the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explores topics in the Twelve related to the cult from several different angles. In the first part, the books within this anthology are treated separately. The analysis aims at assessing each writing's perspective on temples and priests, as well as on various forms of cultic practice, with a particular emphasis on sacrificial worship. It is shown that some books attest to a temple-centered worldview, whereas others evince little or no interest in cultic matters. The concluding part discusses patterns and tendencies within the Twelve as a whole, based on the preceding analysis of individual books. New approaches to the study of cult-related passages in the prophetic literature are outlined. It is argued that the traditional (pro-) cultic//anti-cultic dichotomy needs to be replaced by other types of categorizations.

Keywords: Keywords: temple, cult, sacrifice, the Twelve, anti-cultic, prophetic literature

IN this essay, I will treat the Twelve as an anthology consisting of twelve books. In the first section, each book will be analyzed separately with regard to its particular perspective on the temple cult but also with an eye to editorial perspectives relating to the anthology as a whole. In the concluding section, comparisons between the books will be made. Based on a discussion of some noteworthy patterns and tendencies within the Twelve, I will question traditional categorizations (such as "cultic" versus "cult-critical") and outline the contours of a new approach to the study of cult-related passages in the prophetic literature.

Cult and Temple in the Individual Books

Hosea

The Temple cult constitutes a pervasive theme in the book of Hosea. According to a common view among scholars, the statements concerning cultic issues "are all negative" (Krispenz 2016, 9). In my opinion, however, such a view fails to account for the

book's plurality of perspectives. The official cult is constantly seen as problematic, but for various reasons. In the ensuing analysis, the cult-related prophecies have been divided into seven groups, each of them representing a specific type of problem.

1. *Worship of other gods*. Unsurprisingly in view of the book's many affinities to Deuteronomistic theology (Yee 1987, 308–313), any sacrificial cult devoted to other deities than YHWH is repeatedly condemned (see 2:8, 13 [Heb 2:10, 15; 11:2; 13:1]).
2. *Worship in the wrong place*. The utterance in 4:15, which prohibits the addressees to frequent two cultic sites, Gilgal and Beth-Awen (a pejorative name for Bethel), (p. 118) should probably be understood as expressing of a Judah-oriented outlook, according to which these sanctuaries were considered doomed, along with the Northern kingdom in its entirety (see further the comments on Amos 4:4–5 and 5:4–5 later).
3. *Wrong type of worship*. The people's worship is repeatedly depicted as unorthodox or immoral. According to 4:12–14, the cult performed in open space sanctuaries was accompanied by heterodox divinatory practices and illicit sexual acts. Notably, several passages (8:4–6; 10:5–6; 13:2) indicate that one particular aspect of the official worship of YHWH, namely the veneration of a bull statue in Bethel (referred to as "the calf of Samaria," 8:6), was repudiated as a form of idolatry (Jeremias 1983, 106–107).
4. *Corrupt priests*. The book of Hosea contains several attacks on the priesthood. The following verdict is pronounced against a priest (representing the entire guild?) in his capacity as a teacher: "Because you have rejected the knowledge, I will reject you from serving as my priest; you have forgotten the instruction of your God (*torat eloheka*), so I in turn will forget your children" (4:6). According to 4:8, an oracle replete with double entendre, the priests "feed on" (*yokelu*) the people's "sins" and/or "purification offerings" (*hattat ammi*). It is implied that some corrupt priests encourage iniquities, in order to increase their own incomes via the sacrificial system. Unethical behavior is targeted in 6:9 as well, where a group of priests is compared to a murderous gang of robbers. Notably, the accusations against the priests do not primarily concern their role in the temple cult (Zevit 2004, 203–204).
5. *Too much worship*. The erection of a multitude of altars and standing stones is denounced as a national prestige project (10:1). According to the book's perspective, such cultic installations had become useless. Since the reciprocal relationship with the deity had broken down, atonement could not be achieved: "Though Ephraim has multiplied altars to expiate sin, these have become for him altars for sinning" (8:11). YHWH would refuse all sacrifices offered at these altars (8:13).
6. *Relativized worship*. The saying in 6:6 is often cited as evidence that some prophets rejected all sacrifices (see Krüger 2006, 46; Krispenz 2016, 21–23). The formulations used, however ("I desire love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings"), indicate that this is about priorities. In accordance with the wisdom tradition, it is asserted that ethical conduct is even more valuable than sacrificial worship (cf. Prov 21:3). In other words, the cult is being relativized, perhaps in an exilic context.

7. *No worship at all*. In a couple of passages, the inability to offer sacrifices is viewed as a tragic consequence of deportation. According to 3:4, the Israelites will have to endure for a long time "without sacrifice and standing stone, without ephod and teraphim." This is best understood as an announcement of punishment (Jeremias 1983, 55–56). The same applies to 9:3–4. Clearly, these passages imply that the temple cult was seen as something valuable (with Schüngel-Straumann 1972, 35).

(p. 119) The book of Hosea does not contain any detailed description of a restored temple cult. The (probably postexilic) oracle in 3:5 does seem to imply such a scenario, however, as it envisions that "the Israelites will return and seek YHWH their God." This looks like a reversal of 5:6: "They will go with their flocks and herds to seek YHWH, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them."

As shown earlier, several passages in Hosea presuppose a positive view of temple worship as an important means of interaction with YHWH. Arguably, it is precisely because of the cult's centrality within the editors' ideology that allegedly illegitimate cultic practices are subjected to such harsh criticism.

Joel

Ritual actions occupy a central place in the book of Joel, especially in chapters 1 and 2. The priests are urged to organize cultic activities in response to a societal crisis. Judging from the book's descriptions, failed crop harvests had resulted in a severe shortage of food (Rooke 2016, 83). In this situation, communal rituals were apparently seen as a means to repair "the rupture in the sacred order" (Linville 2004, 110).

In their first appearance, the priests are lamenting because the daily offerings in the temple have been disrupted (1:9). One may infer that the inhabitants of Judah withheld food supplies to the temple in an attempt to prevent starvation (Crenshaw 1995, 104). The cultic crisis is not described, however, as a minor side effect of the national food crisis. On the contrary, the fact that the priestly predicament is mentioned prior to the problems of the rest of the population (1:10–12) "demonstrates the enormous significance that the prophet attributes here to the sacrificial cult" (Rooke 2016, 84). In 1:13–14, the priests are told to "spend the night in sackcloth" (1:13). Further, they are instructed to convoke an assembly and to "sanctify a fast" (1:14).

Proclaiming a fast in the midst of famine may seem cynical to modern readers, but this can be explained in terms of "ritualization" as a societal strategy (Linville 2004, 103). Hence, it could actually make sense to "abstain from even the little that there is in an appeal to God" (Rooke 2016, 86). In a situation of food shortage, moreover, the only ritual actions available were praying, mourning, and fasting. Such rites were not necessarily performed in a temple, yet the events in Joel 1–2 are clearly depicted from a priestly point of view. The primary motivation for the mourning and fasting appears to be that "grain offering and libation are withheld" (1:13), something that would affect primarily the priests.

The theme of fasting and lamentation recurs in 2:12–14 but now with an emphasis on accompanying repentance: “rend your hearts, not your clothes” (2:13). A hopeful perspective is introduced. In response to the people’s acts of mourning and penitence, YHWH might “turn and relent, and leave behind a blessing: grain offering and libation for YHWH, your God” (2:14). The logic of this passage seems to be based on the underlying notion that interrupted temple cult could endanger the communion and communication with the deity (see Eidevall 2012, 38–48, 202). It might perhaps even affect the cosmic order. This explains why a return to normal sacrificial cult here is described as a “blessing” in itself.

(p. 120) A renewed call for a solemn gathering and a communal fast is sounded in 2:15–16. The priests are now instructed to weep and pray on behalf of the people inside the temple, “between the vestibule and the altar” (2:17). These ritual actions are described as successful. In 2:19, YHWH declares: “I am about to send you grain, new wine, and olive oil; you will be satisfied.” Eventually, then, the people’s sufferings are foregrounded, yet it is reasonable to assume that the divine promise also entails the restoration of a fully operational temple cult.

References to priests and cult are conspicuously lacking in the second half of Joel (2:28–3:21 [Heb 3:1-4:21]). The Zion–centered perspective nonetheless is maintained throughout the book (see 2:1, 15, 23; 2:32 [Heb. 3:5]; 3:16–17, 21 [Heb. 4:16–17, 21]).

Previous Joel research often has focused on the eponymous prophet and his relation to the temple cult. He has been classified as a cult prophet affiliated with the temple in Jerusalem (Kapelrud 1948, 176–177) or as belonging to a party of dissidents (Wolff 1977, 12, 36). Recently, Jason LeCureux has suggested that due to its position within the Book of the Twelve (between Hosea and Amos), “Joel can be read within a framework that challenges the priestly and sacrificial system” (2016, 78). In my opinion, the book’s perspective is best characterized as (pro-) priestly and as supportive of the temple cult (with Cook 1995 and Linville 2004). I find it likely that Joel originated within a community closely connected to the temple in Jerusalem.

Amos

In the book of Amos, all references to cultic matters occur within polemical contexts. As I will demonstrate, however, this need not indicate that the author(s)/editor(s) rejected all forms of organized worship.

Importantly, the rhetorical force of some prophecies seems to rely on the notion that temples and rituals are of crucial importance. The utterance in 2:8, which denounces the desecration of altars, is a case in point. Likewise, the threat pronounced in 3:14, that “the horns of the altar [in Bethel] will be cut off and fall to the ground,” would fail to make sense if altars were thought to be of no avail.

In several passages, named cultic sites are condemned. In most cases, the critique most likely pertains to the YHWH cult. Allusions to worship of other gods are only found in a couple of prophecies which seem to be of postexilic origin, 5:26 and 8:14. According to 4:4–5, a "sarcastic imitation of the priestly call to worship" (Andersen and Freedman 1989, 433), it is pointless to participate in sacrificial cult at Bethel and Gilgal. The destruction of these two sites is the theme of 5:6 (see also 5:4–5). The underlying ideology can be reconstructed as follows: because of various sins and crimes, mentioned elsewhere in the book (e.g., 2:6–8; 5:10–12), the Northern kingdom was regarded as doomed and YHWH had therefore abandoned all sanctuaries in that kingdom (see 7:9); hence, it was not possible to reach the deity by means of any ritual actions performed *at those sites*. This explains why some prophecies proclaim a rejection of the cult that can be characterized as "total, but *situational*" (Eidevall 2016, 109). In Amos (p. 121) 5:21–24, it is not stated that YHWH dislikes all sacrifices. Rather, as indicated by v. 24, the point being made is that YHWH (allegedly) refused to accept the gifts of the Israelites in the prevailing situation, "because of the lack of justice in their society" (Eidevall 2017, 169).

With the exception of Beer-Sheba (which was frequented by pilgrims from the north), all the condemned sanctuaries are situated in the Northern kingdom, Israel. By contrast, it is proclaimed in the book's opening oracle that Zion, the temple mount in Jerusalem, is the place from where YHWH "utters his voice" (1:2). One therefore may formulate an additional hypothesis, concerning the Judah-centered ideology of the postmonarchic editor(s): "In line with Deuteronomistic theology, the temple in Jerusalem was probably seen as the only legitimate place of sacrificial worship" (Eidevall 2017, 114). If this is correct, the book of Amos cannot be described as persistently anti-cultic. According to the prevailing editorial perspective, YHWH had nothing against sacrifices, unless they were offered in sanctuaries that were considered doomed (because of sins and crimes) or illegitimate.

Only one priest is mentioned in this book: Amaziah, presented as "priest in Bethel" (7:10). According to the short narrative in 7:10–17, Amaziah prohibited Amos from prophesying in Israel and attempted to send him back to Judah (7:12–13). Apparently representing the state authorities, Amaziah is intent on defending the temple in Bethel, which he refers to as "a royal sanctuary, a state temple" (7:13), from the prophet's verbal attacks. Ironically, though, he thereby precipitates the downfall of the Northern kingdom. According to the preceding vision reports, Amos had the power to save the nation from divinely decreed disasters by means of intercession (7:1–6). Amaziah cannot silence the prophetic voice, but intercession ceases and the verdict becomes definitive: "The end has come for my people Israel" (8:2).

The vision recounted in Amos 9:1 describes the demolition of an unnamed temple. In the light of several preceding prophecies (3:14; 5:6; 7:9, 13), one may infer that Bethel is meant, but some allusions point in the direction of the Jerusalem temple (Bergler 2000, 452). YHWH is seen standing at the altar, issuing a command to strike down the pillars. As pointed out by Aaron Schart (2003, 51) in a comment on this text, "the temple is the center that gives refuge, stability, and prosperity." Thus, even this horrifying vision of

temple destruction may indirectly attest to the centrality of temple worship within the editorial worldview.

Obadiah

The book of Obadiah is dominated by one specific prophetic genre, namely oracles against foreign nations (in this case: Edom). With its Zion-centered perspective (vv. 17, 21) it may, to some extent, reflect “the characteristic concerns of the Jerusalem cult” (Coggins 1982, 92). Priests and sacrifices are not mentioned, however, and the temple cult as a topic is completely absent from the book.

(p. 122) Jonah

Within the narrative world of Jonah, cultic actions are mainly carried out by non-Israelites. The sailors pray (to their own gods, 1:5) and sacrifice (to YHWH[!], 1:16). Having heard Jonah’s brief sermon, the citizens of Nineveh “put on sackcloth” and “proclaimed a fast” (3:5). Like the sailors, they are examples of “gentiles whose worship is pleasing to the God of Israel” (Tiemeyer 2016b, 122). The book reports that God relented, as he saw their acts of repentance (3:10). There is a contrast between these pious gentiles and the book’s protagonist, Jonah. Only once, in his act of prayer in chapter 2 which looks like an editorial insertion, does he engage in worship. In this prayer, YHWH’s temple (in Jerusalem?) is mentioned twice (2:4, 7 [Heb 2:5, 8]).

Micah

Cult is a minor topic in Micah. Although the prophecies collected in chapter 4 focus on the destiny of Zion, nothing is said about any (former or future) temple, besides the general reference to Zion as “the mountain of YHWH’s house” (4:1). One passage, 6:6–8, has been much discussed, because it appears to denounce sacrifices in a radical way. A row of rhetorical questions (vv. 6–7), on the theme “with what shall I approach YHWH” (v. 6a), which enumerate various sacrificial gifts (including both burnt offerings and human sacrifice!), are followed by an exhortation to “act justly, and to love mercy” (v. 8). This didactic dialogue, with its use of hyperbole (e.g., v. 7: “thousands of rams”) hardly discusses actual cultic practice in the Jerusalem temple (Ben Zvi 2000, 148). The message conveyed, that worship has to be combined with ethics, recalls the wisdom tradition (see Prov 15:8; 21:3; Ernst 1994, 96–97).

Nahum

Priestly organized worship is a topic of relatively marginal importance in Nahum. Cultic allusions are in fact confined to a brief passage (1:14–15 [Heb 1:14–2:1]) where two genres that are often seen as opposed to each other have been juxtaposed in a unique way: a cult-critical oracle (1:14) which denounces idolatry is immediately followed by an exhortation to organize cultic events: “Celebrate your festivals, O Judah!” (1:15 [Heb. 2:1]).

Because the bulk of the remaining text focuses on (or, perhaps more to the point, celebrates) the destruction of Nineveh, Nahum has been described as “nationalistic” (Haldar 1947, 149). In recent scholarship, such assessments have been replaced by a more nuanced discussion (see, e.g., O’Brien 2009). Although the label “cult prophecy” may not be apt either (Dietrich 2014, 21–35), the author(s) of Nahum likely belonged to circles linked to the Jerusalem temple.

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Habakkuk

With regard to this book’s relation to the temple cult, one might speak of a discrepancy between form and content. On the one hand, large sections of Habakkuk represent genres that are generally deemed to be cultic, above all the laments at the book’s beginning (1:2–4, 12–17) and the depictions of theophany at its end (chap. 3). Indeed, this writing “is dominated by direct address to the deity” (Boda 2017, 208). For these reasons, Habakkuk has often been counted among the cult prophets (Jeremias 1970, 90–99; Mason 1994, 94).

On the other hand, this prophetic book contains very few references to temple worship. Priests are not mentioned. The most interesting utterance is 2:20, which combines an assertion of divine presence and a call to reverential silence: “YHWH is in his holy temple; hush before him, all the earth!” (2:20). Arguably, then, the case of Habakkuk shows that so-called cult prophecy could address mainly noncultic topics.

Zephaniah

In the opening section of Zephaniah, the prophetic voice condemns a group of allegedly idolatrous priests (1:4, *kemorim*) and certain cultic practices that were considered heterodox such as adoration of “the host of heaven” (1:5; cf. 2 Kgs 21:3). In 1:7, a call to silence, accompanied by an ambiguous announcement of a festival (“the day of YHWH”), introduces an oracle of judgment which appears to employ the motif of a communal sacrificial meal (*zebakh*) metaphorically. The concluding section (3:14–20) is replete with Zion theology. The only positive example of worship in the book is a procession bringing offerings to YHWH, “from beyond the rivers of Cush” (3:10). The text does not indicate whether these worshipers were thought to be Cushites or returning Judeans.

Haggai

Perhaps due to its strong focus on the rebuilding the Jerusalem temple, the book of Haggai says almost nothing about practiced temple cult. The high priest Joshua is portrayed in a favorable way as one of the key figures in the temple project (1:12–15). In addition, some unnamed priests are consulted, but exclusively on halakhic matters regarding (possible transmission of) holiness and impurity (2:11–13). According to Haggai (1:7–11; 2:6–9, 15–19), the primary reason for resuming the temple-building work seems to be “that the existence of the Temple assures economic wealth” (Assis 2008, 6). In addition, it is asserted that YHWH will be pleased and honored (1:8). Curiously enough, the need to re-

store sacrificial worship is not explicitly mentioned in this context, even though the utterance in 2:14 might imply that the people's offerings would remain impure (and, as a consequence, unacceptable to YHWH) as long as there was no temple but only an altar.

(p. 124) Zechariah

As regards its perspective on priests and temple cult, the first part of Zechariah, comprising chapters 1–8, has much in common with the book of Haggai (see Boda 2017, 112–125). According to 1:16, YHWH himself has commissioned the rebuilding the Jerusalem temple (cf. also 6:12). Some passages betray a decidedly Zion-centered outlook (1:14–17; 2:10–12 [Heb. 2:14–16; 8:1–3]). In one short narrative episode, a priestly ruling on mourning practice is sought (7:3). In this first part of the book, moreover, Joshua, the high priest, has a prominent role as a leader of the community (see 3:1–10; 4:12–14; 6:9–14). Apart from the investiture of the high priest (chapter 3), however, there is no emphasis on rituals linked to the temple cult. Sacrifices are, for instance, not mentioned at all in Zech 1–8.

It is more difficult to discover a general pattern in the latter part of the book, comprising chapters 9–14. One finds numerous references to Jerusalem but very few allusions to the temple cult. YHWH's reference to "my house" (*beti*) in 9:8, in the context of warfare and defense, undoubtedly refers to his sanctuary at Mount Zion. The temple is mentioned again in 11:13 but without any explicit connection to practiced cult. The book's concluding utopia (14:16–21), preceded by descriptions of battles in and around Jerusalem (14:1–15), does however focus on cultic matters. According to 14:16–19, the survivors from all nations will have to travel to Jerusalem and participate in YHWH worship, especially at Sukkoth, the festival of booths. If not, YHWH will afflict them with drought. This can be understood against the backdrop of the following practice: "at least by Second Temple times, prayers for rain became part of the celebration of Sukkoth" (Meyers and Meyers 1993, 473). This somewhat bizarre depiction of enforced religious uniformity is followed by a vision of perfect purity. According to 14:20–21, the sphere of holiness and purity, traditionally restricted to the temple area in Jerusalem, will expand and cover the entire land of Judah. In the ideal future, "every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to YHWH of hosts, so that all who sacrifice/slaughter may come and use them to boil (the sacrificial meat) in them" (14:21). This might of course solve some practical problems associated with such large numbers of pilgrims (Petersen 1995, 160). One may add the observation that it appears to be taken for granted that YHWH will find all sacrifices acceptable in this ideal future.

Malachi

Most scholars would probably agree that temple worship is the main topic of Malachi. Apparently, it was composed in circles with expert knowledge regarding priestly duties. Four of the six disputation speeches in the book deal explicitly with cultic matters. From a structural point of view, one may speak of a very large cult-related block (1:6–3:12), which constitutes the dominant centerpiece of the composition. In most passages, more-

over, the priests would seem to be the primary addressees (Tiemeyer 2006, 17–27). One may therefore safely conclude that the author(s)/editors viewed "the cult as an important and integral element in the community's life" (Rooke 2016, 90). Far from praising the management of the contemporary cult, however, several passages contain furious verbal attacks on the priests serving in the Jerusalem temple.

(p. 125) The most vehement condemnations are found in 1:6–2:9. In the first part of this lengthy disputation speech, 1:6–14, it is argued that the priests have shown disrespect to YHWH. They are accused of violating the rules (see Lev 22:17–25; Deut 15:21; 17:1) by accepting blemished, sick, and stolen animals as sacrificial victims (1:8, 13–14). Since they have brought imperfect and impure offerings to the altar, like disobedient servants who place defiled food on their master's table (1:6–7), YHWH has resolved to reject them and their sacrifices (1:10b). It is even implied that a temporary shutdown would be preferable: "Oh, that one of you would shut the gates, so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain!" (1:10a). Interestingly, the author of Mal 1:6–14 seems to have drawn on Amos 5:21–24 (Kratz 1998, 113–114).

This diatribe is interrupted by a short oracle, marked by a universalistic outlook: "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and pure offerings" (1:11). This bold assertion serves as a contrast to the surrounding depictions of malfunctioning cult. The message conveyed can be paraphrased as follows: although the transgressions of the priests in Jerusalem are serious, they cannot stop YHWH from being honored as the supreme god of all nations. Arguably, the identity of the worshipers (gentiles or Diaspora Jews?) is of secondary importance.

The allegations against the priests in 1:6–14 are followed by curses (2:1–3), but as noted by Joachim Schaper, "the book of Malachi is very clear in differentiating between the *office* and its present *incumbents*" (2004, 186, emphasis as in orig.): the critique of contemporary cult is set against a background of high esteem for the priesthood. In the ensuing passage, 2:4–9, which refers to YHWH's covenant with Levi (2:4–6), one finds the following description of an ideal situation: "The priest's lips should preserve knowledge, and they should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is a messenger of YHWH of hosts" (2:7). The idea that the priest's primary duty is to pass on knowledge and instruction (*torah*) recalls Hos 4:6, and these passages may belong to the same redactional layer within the Twelve (Schart 2016, 230–231).

Despite the announcements of rejected sacrifices (1:10, 13; 2:3), the book of Malachi cannot be called anti-cultic. On the contrary, it envisions a future when the priests ("Levi's descendants") will be purified (3:3; both ritually and morally?), and all sacrifices offered in Jerusalem will be accepted by YHWH "as in the days of old" (3:4). This might allude to the cultic reforms associated with Ezra and Nehemiah.

Concluding Comparisons and Reflections

The twelve books within the collection of “minor” prophets thus far have been treated individually. This has revealed both similarities and differences between them in regard to their attitude toward institutionalized cult. I will now present an overview of the literary landscape of the Twelve. From that perspective, interesting patterns emerge to which (p. 126) previous research has not paid sufficient attention. In the following, I will propose new directions for studies of the prophets (or, the prophetical literature) and the cult with an emphasis on the Twelve. Old hypotheses may have to be abandoned. New questions need to be asked.

I begin with one of the most obvious observations that one makes from a macro-perspective: the uneven distribution of passages dealing with temple cult. Whereas some books discuss cultic issues at length, other books mention temples or sacrifices more or less in passing. Indeed, large portions of the Twelve do not touch upon the topic of temple cult at all. On a closer look, one may detect some conspicuous patterns. First, the anthology seems to have been arranged in such a way that the most heated discussions of the sacrificial cult are concentrated in its framework, the beginning book of Hosea and the ending book of Malachi. In combination with a chronological sequence from the monarchic era to the Second Temple era, this arrangement highlights both continuity and contrast regarding the cult. Whereas the critique in Hosea targeted sanctuaries and practices that were considered doomed, the similarly severe accusations in Malachi aimed at reforming the cult in the temple in Jerusalem.

An additional observation is that temple worship is a marginal (or even nonexisting) topic in some books such as Obadiah and Nahum that have been traditionally associated with institutional cult prophecy. Conversely, some books associated with “cult-critical” prophecy show much more interest in this topic, judging from the space devoted to the cult. I have argued elsewhere, in a discussion of Amos, that the epithet “anti-cultic prophet” is anachronistic (Eidevall 2016). Most likely, all prophets had some kind of cultic connection. Moreover, as noted by Stephen Cook, “the evidence of Joel shows cultic prophets could well be ‘challenging and forthright’” (1995, 195). Based on the present investigation, I suggest that it would be more fruitful to categorize prophetic books (not prophets) based on their level of *interest* in the cult rather than their supposed *attitude* toward it. This would yield fresh and unexpected constellations.

According to my estimations, the books within the Twelve that deal most extensively with cultic matters are Hosea, Joel, and Malachi. The next group, consisting of books where the topic of temple worship is prominent but not dominant, includes Amos, Jonah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah. It is difficult to decide where to place Haggai; although rebuilding the temple can be said to be *the* topic of the book, very little is said about actual worship. Finally, some books show little (or no) interest in sanctuaries and worship. This group consists of Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk. One might of course object to this categorization. Are not some books consistently negative toward the cult, while others are affirmative? I believe this is a misconception. In order to illustrate that, I consider an-

other pattern in the Twelve, namely the (im)balance between critical and positive statements concerning temple cult.

Utterances that actively support sacrificial cult or institutionalized worship more generally are in fact very few. In Joel, the priests are urged to organize a communal fast and to intercede for the people (1:14; 2:15–17); in Nahum, the Judeans are encouraged to celebrate festivals (1:15 [Heb. 2:1]). By contrast, those prophecies that criticize or problematize various aspects of the cult are quite numerous. If a temporal axis is introduced, (p. 127) together with a geographical dimension, one may discover an interesting pattern. Sacrificial worship *here* and *now* (from the point of view of the authors/editors) is rarely described in a positive way. Comments on contemporary cultic practices are, as a rule, problematizing rather than promoting. This applies to Hosea, at the head of the collection, as well as to Malachi at the collection's end and all the books in between. There are certainly some positive portrayals of worship in the Twelve, but they tend to be located either outside Judah/Israel or in the future.

It is likely that the absence of detailed descriptions of well-functioning daily worship is due to genre conventions. Without any intention to revive the much criticized "prophet versus priest antagonism hypothesis" (Zevit 2004), I believe it is important to keep in mind that priests and prophets had different roles. Whereas it was a priestly task to declare divine acceptance of sacrifices, one may conjecture that divine rejection could be communicated by either priests or prophets. The phenomenon of prophecy was, after all, closely linked to crises of various kinds and thus the prophetic literature could also be expected to comment on crises and catastrophes. This would explain the general tendency within the Twelve to focus on worship in exceptional situations: illegitimate cult, priestly malpractice, abolished cult, and so on. In line with this tendency, Haggai focuses on the rebuilding of the temple rather than on rituals to be performed in the temple.

Prophecy (oral as well as written) would also be expected to offer alternatives, or positive contrasts, to the prevailing situation. In the same vein, we find depictions of praiseworthy cultic acts performed by others in distant countries (Jonah 3:5–10; Zeph 3:10; Mal 1:11), as well as visions of perfect worship in Jerusalem in a (more or less) utopian future (Hos 3:5; Zech 14:16–21; Mal 3:3–4). Yet another strategy, represented by a few passages, downplays the significance of sacrifices and other rituals in comparison to ethical conduct and piety. This relativizing tendency betrays influence from the wisdom tradition (see the comments on Hos 6:6 and Mic 6:6–8 earlier).

Most of the prophecies in the Twelve that problematize various aspects of the cult presuppose a positive view of temple worship as such. Arguably, passages like Hos 9:1–4 and Amos 5:21–24 would lose much of their rhetorical force if sacrifice was viewed as something marginal or unnecessary. I find it likely that the prophets (and the authors/editors) attacked the cult precisely because its central importance was generally acknowledged. Indeed, several passages in the Twelve indicate that the editors of this anthology were convinced that interrupted or dysfunctional sacrificial cult in the Jerusalem temple could endanger the cosmic stability (see the earlier comments on Joel and Haggai).

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The Nations in the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay traces the theme of the non-Israelite nations across the Book of the Twelve with an eye toward appreciating both its diversity and its coherence. Eschewing an exclusively diachronic (compositional) or synchronic (holistic) approach, it draws attention to the different chronological frames in which the nations are presented and the different ways that they are characterized. The diversity evident in the nations' varying identities and destinies coheres when those characteristics are seen within their respective past, present, and future timeframes and in the light of the Minor Prophets' strong theological orientation. This perspective correlates both identity and destiny with Israel's God and makes a reconciled relationship to YHWH the determinative factor for the nations no less than for Israel and Judah.

Keywords: Keywords: nations, identity, non-Israelite, synchronic, diachronic, coherence, diversity, theology

(p. 131) THE theme of the non-Israelite nations in the Minor Prophets is as complex as it is prominent. The relationships of the nations with Israel/Judah, as with each other, are highly diverse, and the very identity of most nations varies significantly over the temporal span sketched by the books in which they appear. Diversity of this sort has often led interpreters to choose either a synchronic approach in which the theme's historical complexity is minimized or a diachronic approach in which it is maximized and attributed to discordant redactions (Hong 2013). A binary choice of method at the outset, however, risks overlooking the fact that constantly weighing the many factors that hold texts together over against those that weaken their integrity is an essential part of the reading process from beginning to end (Landy 2010). The reader inevitably begins with the possibility that the text is a whole composed of organically related parts (Pelletier 2011). Once all of the text's content is clearly in view, the relative weight of its discordant and concordant features determines whether a diachronic (better, compositional) or synchronic (better, holistic) perspective offers a better explanation of its unity and diversity (Noble 1993). Tremblay (2016) and Sweeney (2012) offer noteworthy methodological critiques of some features of redactional explanations of textual development.

The approach to the nations theme taken here traces its contours and analyzes the various dimensions of its diversity but does not propose definitive evaluations of the theme's continuity in individual books or across the collection. It follows instead the axioms that diversity and discontinuity can only appear in the course of an attempted holistic reading (Dooley and Levinsohn 2001, 11), that semantic-level coherence (i.e., the ways that the text makes sense) is more essential to the text's unity than is surface-level cohesion (i.e., lexical, conjunctive, and phrase-level connectedness) (Hasan 1985), and that cohesion and coherence are not all-or-nothing matters but rather fall along a spectrum (Sanders and Maat 2006). By highlighting both the diversity and potential coherence of the nations theme in the Twelve, it leaves to the reader the task of determining the degree to which the theme exhibits continuity.

(p. 132) This discussion arranges the Twelve in chronological order following explicit textual statements (when possible) or textually based inferences (e.g., Nahum between the fall of Thebes and of Nineveh). Hypothetical reconstructions of their settings are avoided (Sommer 2011), and each book will be dealt with as an independent composition in light of its superscriptions and distinct literary and theological features (in support of this position, see Ben Zvi 2009; for a contrary view, see Schart 2008). Different evaluations of the in/coherence of the pericopes studied here and their relation to one another can be found especially in the monographs by Wöhrle (2006, 2008), strongly emphasizing compositional factors and redactions holding the Twelve together; Hagedorn (2011) and Roth (2005), consistently emphasizing compositional features and considering books individually; and Timmer (2015), consistently emphasizing coherence amid complexity and considering books individually.

Hosea

Although Hosea exceptionally includes no oracles concerning the nations, the characters of Israel, YHWH, and the nations still constitute the primary actors in the drama of Israel's history it presents. This drama unfolds in three diachronically separated acts.

The Past: The Nations as a Place of Oppression from Which YHWH Delivered Israel

Fraught relationships between Israel and the nations (specifically, Egypt) in the past constitute their and Israel's identity in the present. YHWH affirms the fundamental importance of the election of Israel and their privileged relationship by affirming that he called his son out of Egypt (Hos 11:1), tying his very identity ("I am YHWH your God") to the exodus event (12:9; 13:4). The exodus is YHWH's gracious, loving act of deliverance for his people that flows out of his promise to Abraham, creating the obligation for Israel to reciprocate with covenantal fidelity and love (12:13).

The Present: The Nations as Potential Sources of Security That in Fact Oppress

At present, however, Israel has put her trust in other nations rather than responding to YHWH in faithful love. Assyria (5:13) is one “lover” (8:9) among the “nations” that Israel has hired (8:10), a clear indication that such alliances will be as destructive as Israel’s pursuit of other gods (2:7 and passim). Egypt, Israel’s archetypal oppressor, is another (p. 133) focus of Israel’s naïve (*potah*, 7:11) hope for security and stability (12:1). The juxtaposition of Assyria and Egypt in these passages reveals Israel’s vacillating trust and the ultimate futility of her efforts. Indeed, Israel falls prey to the nations (7:8; 8:3, 7; 10:6) even as she trusts in them (7:7).

The Future: The Nations as Central to Covenant Discipline but Also to Subsequent Deliverance

The final act in Hosea’s drama is broken into two parts. In the near term, Israel’s covenant infidelity will result in exile. Egypt is mentioned first as a place of exile (7:16), a return to the archetypal oppression of the past (8:13; 9:3); Egypt will “gather and bury” Israel like the wilderness generation (9:6). Assyria, too, will become a place of exile (9:3), as will other “nations” (9:17).

In the end, however, YHWH will renew his people and deliver them from this hopeless situation. His roar will make them tremble and summon them to return, changing them and liberating them at the same time (11:10–11). The book’s last chapter puts on the lips of repentant Israel a disavowal of her former trust in Assyria and Egypt (14:3 [Heb 14:4). Israel’s repentance and trust in YHWH allow her to flourish like the very land to which she returns under divine favor (14:5–7 [Heb 14:6-8]).

Amos

Amos is the first of many books of the Twelve to present a complex approach to the nations.

Individual Nations as Objects of Divine Punishment Because of Past Rebellion

Many of Amos’s references are rooted in the past, when various nations or city-states committed moral offenses against YHWH, but others reach into the future, when he will punish the nations for their actions. Some of the nations’ sins were committed against other non-Israelite groups (e.g., Moab against Edom, 2:1), while others were committed against Israel/Judah (Damascus and Amon, against Gilead, 1:3, 13; Edom against Judah [probably], 1:11). All these instances of rebellion (*pesha*) against YHWH involved the use of force, and thus the punishment focuses on military and political infrastructure (gates,

fortresses). In the case of the Philistines (1:8) and perhaps Moab (2:2–3), the punishment is tantamount to complete destruction.

(p. 134) Some Nations Are Essentially on a Par with Israel

The invitation in Amos 3:9 to the Philistines (already condemned in 1:6–8) and the Egyptians to witness the "tumults" and "oppression" that characterize Samaria in the author's present implies that they are in a morally superior position. The same holds for their role in Israel's punishment, which is variously attributed to a "foe" (3:11), an enemy located beyond Damascus (5:27, referring to Assyria), and a "nation" (6:14). Most forcefully, Amos 9:7 attributes an unprecedented comparative role to the Philistines and the Arameans (cf. 1:3–5). There YHWH says that the Israelites are like the Cushites (i.e., without a unique relationship with him) because YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt is not essentially different from his relocation of the Philistines and Arameans long ago.

Some of the Nations Will Be Integrated in Restored Israel

The book's final section presents a radically new relationship between purified Israel (cf. 9:8–10) and the nations. Here Judah also plays a role by virtue of the Davidic figure in 9:11. Whatever military connotation the verb *yarash* might involve, the central claim of 9:12 is that YHWH's restored people and their Davidic king will "possess" the "remnant of Edom and all the nations over whom [YHWH's] name is called." Since this phrase is used elsewhere only with reference to Israel's unique and salvific relationship to YHWH (e.g., Deut 28:10; 1 Chr 7:14), its application here to non-Israelites involves the establishment of an equivalent relationship and so involves deliverance rather than destruction (Kessler 2015). While not all non-Israelites will share this happy destiny, some will be drawn into a restored Davidic kingdom and enjoy the blessings that come to renewed Israel (9:13–15; cf. 9:8–10; Ps 72).

Jonah

Whether or not the book of Jonah is read as historiographic, its connection with one of YHWH's eighth-century prophets (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25) and its adroit and extensive dependence upon earlier Scripture give its message significant theological weight. Both groups of non-Israelites that it presents contrast sharply with the Israelite prophet Jonah (and thus with Israel, which he probably represents; Jon 1:10).

The Sailors

The sailors, who have no connection to a nation, pray to their gods for deliverance once YHWH's storm strikes their ship (1:5). When their prayers go unanswered, they cast lots and discover that Jonah is the guilty party because he is attempting to flee from YHWH. (p. 135) Contrary to his suggestion that they throw him into the sea (essentially assisted suicide), the sailors make every attempt to avoid involvement in his death (1:13). When their efforts fail, they pray using language characteristic of faithful Israelites (Ps 50:14–

16; 115:3; 135:6), addressing God as YHWH and recognizing his role as judge and ruler of the world (Jon 1:14). Their transformation into exemplary worshippers of YHWH is completed by the narrator's comment in 1:16 that they "revered YHWH greatly" (cf. Ps 25:14; 33:18, etc.) and offered a sacrifice and made vows to him (cf. Ps 50:14; Isa 19:21).

The Ninevites

While some of the events reported in Jonah 3 have parallels in Assyrian sources (e.g., the call to repentance following an omen), the outcome of Jonah's mission is unparalleled. The implicitly conditional threat of judgment that he announces leads the Ninevites to repent, although they demonstrate no explicit religious change (Jonah 3:5). The "king" of Nineveh removes his royal regalia and takes on the role of a mourner, calls for a city-wide fast, and explicitly identifies the city's behavior as "evil" and "violent" (3:8), recognizing that "God" may or may not relent from his threat (3:9). God does indeed relent when he sees that Nineveh "turned" (*shub*) from its sinful behavior (3:10; cf. 1:2), and the city escapes judgment.

The Divine Character

Jonah's reaction to Nineveh's deliverance in 4:2, a citation of Exod 34:6–7, brings to the fore YHWH's readiness to show grace to the most threatening and violent nation of the eighth century, just as he had shown it to his people despite their sin (Exod 32, etc.) The belligerent prophet protests against YHWH showing mercy to the nations, while YHWH calmly defends his actions (this is the only case in which Exod 34:6–7 is extended to non-Israelites; cf. Joel 2:13; Mic 7:18). By connecting this book to a prophet active during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:25), this author places it within Israelite historiography of the eighth century. The book's narrative nature makes it unique within the Twelve and adds force to its argument that YHWH can and does deliver guilty non-Israelites who repent (see the helpful narrative analysis of Lux [1992, 75–92]).

Micah

Non-Israelite groups have a number of different roles in Micah (e.g., 1:2–4; 4:5; 5:4; 7:12, 15), especially as objects of punishment and beneficiaries of deliverance. Judah is presented in a similarly complex way, playing a role in both the judgment and the salvation of the nations. (Richelle [2012] surveys interpretative trends of the key passages and helpfully explores their interrelation.) These dynamics reflect the theology of the (p. 136) covenant established with Abraham and sketched in Gen 12:1–3, but they also destabilize national identities inside and outside Israel.

The Judgment of Adversarial Nations

Against the background of the sins of Judah and Israel (Mic 1:2–7), YHWH announces judgment against the nations and Israel/Judah alike (e.g., 1:6; 3:12; 4:10, etc.). The nations that punish YHWH's people are unaware, however, of his plans to destroy them in

that adversarial role (4:12) by means of the Daughter of Zion (4:13). While some of these predictions seem to refer to near-future events like the siege of Jerusalem (5:1 [Heb. 4:14]) or exile in Babylon (4:10) and thus presuppose Judah's defeat, other scenarios are more utopic or eschatological. When Assyria enters Judah's land following the rise of its final ruler (5:2 [Heb. 5:1]), Assyria's armies will be "shepherded…with the sword" (5:6 [Heb. 5:5]), and the remnant of Judah will tear its adversaries to pieces like a lion (5:8–9 [Heb. 5:7–8]). In the same context, YHWH's promise to take vengeance upon "the nations that did not obey" him (5:15[Heb. 5:14]) makes clear the theological, rather than political or ethnic, nature of these events.

The Deliverance of Submissive Nations

The Judean remnant in Micah has two roles that reflect a similar distinction among the nations. Although YHWH will use the Judean remnant to punish the nations that oppose Judah and disobey him, this same remnant will be like dew and showers on the grass for a different subset of the nations (5:7, contrast 5:8–9 [Heb. 5:6, contrast 5:7–8]). That subgroup of the nations is identified most clearly in 4:1–4 (shared with Isa 2:2–4) and Mic 7:16–17. In the first passage, set in a future when YHWH's exaltation draws "many nations" to Jerusalem (4:1), these non-Israelites are defined by their submission to YHWH and his will (4:2) and by their rejection of violence and subsequent peaceful interaction (4:3). This new identity culminates in their enjoyment of blessings that characterized Israel at its apogee (4:4, cf. 1 Kgs 4:25 for 4:4a; Lev 26:6 for 4:4b). The second passage focuses almost exclusively on the nations' submission to YHWH, whom they will "fear" (*pachad*) and revere (*yara*; cf. Isa 49:23; Ps 72:9, etc.) after abandoning their pretensions to power and glory (Mic 7:16). While 7:16–17 is less clear than 4:1–4 on some points, both passages affirm that a subgroup of the nations will become faithful followers of YHWH, essentially putting them in the same religious category as the Judean remnant (cf. 4:5b).

Nahum

Nahum's negative characterization of Assyria contrasts sharply with its view of all other nations, many of which had oppressed Israel/Judah in the past.

(p. 137) Assyria

Nahum's condemnation of Assyria is carefully focused on Assyria as an empire rather than as a homogeneous population (see Timmer [2012] on Nahum's use of stereotypes and hybridity). Its proclamations of destruction are directed against Assyria's king (1:14; 2:12–13 [Heb. 2:13–14]; 3:18–19), army (1:12; chaps. 2, 3 passim), capital city, and nobles (3:17, 18), rather than against its population as a whole. The Assyrian monarch in particular is the opponent of YHWH himself (1:11), and YHWH's retribution against him is described in detail. By presenting Assyria as a violent and autonomous empire that refuses to recognize YHWH's sovereignty and does what it wills with its countless victims (3:1–4),

the Assyrian population is only indirectly implicated in the empire's ideology and violence.

The Nations Who Are Assyria's Victims

Nahum's focus on Assyria as an empire uniquely opposed to God in its pursuit of material wealth and imperial aggrandizement through unbridled violence is matched by an unusually tempered depiction of the many nations under Assyria's sway. Described only as its victims, there is no mention of these states' possible wrongdoing. Indeed, YHWH's assault on Assyria liberates them together with Judah, and their joy after its fall (3:19) parallels Judah's (1:15 [Heb. 2:1]).

Beyond National Identities

On the seventh-century ancient Near Eastern stage that is the focus of much of Nahum, the morally and religiously outrageous behavior of Neo-Assyria preserves the nations who were its victims from critique for their (comparatively minor) abuses of power and opposition to YHWH and his people. The book's opening hymn (1:2–8), however, presents the last act of history quite differently. The absence of any ethnic, geographic, and national terms from this unit means that the nations are literally not present and Judahite ethnicity and nationality are not mentioned. The ultimate outcomes associated with the global theophany that the passage describes (1:7–8) are determined solely by individuals' relationships with YHWH (1:6). Nahum 1:3's echo of Exod 34:6–7 (cf. Jon 4:2) positions YHWH's gracious and compassionate character on a stage in which the categories of non/Israelite no longer function.

Habakkuk

Habakkuk presents Babylon and other nations in different ways, using at least three chronologically distinct perspectives. For a different perspective, see Boda (2014).

(p. 138) Babylon in Judah's Historical Experience

In the first perspective, Babylon appears on the scene of Judah's historical experience as the divinely ordained means of punishment for its sin (Hab 1:5–11). YHWH portrays Babylon as distinct from, and indeed radically opposed to, all other states (1:6, 9–10) and as defined by violence and self-worship (1:9, 11). Habakkuk echoes YHWH's religious critique of Babylon (1:16), sees it as opposed to humanity as a whole (1:14–15; cf. 2:5), and sets it apart from the "nations" (1:17). Unlike Judah (1:2–4), no wrong is attributed here to other non-Israelite nations; their only role is that of Babylon's victims (cf. Nah 1:9–3:19).

Babylon in the Future

The woes of Hab 2 sharpen these points of critique against Babylon and confidently affirm that the empire will not go unpunished. In these anticipated judgments, Babylon's victims rise up against her, repaying the empire in kind for its violence and oppression (2:7–8, 10–11, 12, 15–17). Behind these geopolitical manifestations of justice lies YHWH's judgment against Babylon's violence (2:13, 16) and rejection of his uniqueness and glory (2:18–20), which will one day fill the earth (2:14). In this second perspective, the nations are no longer Babylon's victims but the means by which divine justice brings the empire down. Despite this aggression, no sins are attributed to the nations, although they are simultaneously called to "be silent" before YHWH in reverent awe (cf. Zeph 1:7; Zech 2:13 [Heb. 2:17]).

The Nations in the Past and the Future

The third perspective concerning the nations, found in the theophanic hymn of Hab 3:3–15, radically redefines the "nations" in terms very similar to Babylon as presented earlier in the book: the nations share the key characteristic of being "wicked" (*rasha*, 3:13; used elsewhere only to characterize part of Judah [1:4] and Babylon as an empire [1:13]). In this poem the prophet looks forward to YHWH's resolution of all injustice and recalls YHWH's past actions in favor of "his people" and against the anonymous "nations," whose role then was defined by their aggression against Israel or opposition to YHWH (3:6, 11, echoing the exodus and the conquest of Canaan; and 3:15, echoing the destruction of the Egyptian forces at the Red Sea).

The identity of those whom the prophet says YHWH will deliver also changes fundamentally in this unit. There is no reference to "Judah," and those whom YHWH will deliver are instead identified only as his "people" and "anointed" (3:13). That group is set in binary opposition to the wicked, a term which characterizes the "nations" in the future but which also describes part of Judah in the past (1:4). The absence of Judah, Babylon, and every other geopolitical entity other than those of the distant past (p. 139) indicates that national categories and identities are without significance in the future divine judgment that Habakkuk anticipates; faith in YHWH (3:16–18) is the only means of deliverance (note *yesha* here and in 3:13; 1:2).

Zephaniah

The various destinies foretold for the nations in Zephaniah are set within the foreboding global judgment of 1:2–18 (similar to Nah 1:2–8). The ethnically and nationally nonspecific nature of 1:2–3 and 1:14–18 predicts the judgment of humanity as a whole (*adam*, 1:3, 17; "all the earth" and "all the inhabitants of the earth," 1:18). This perspective forms an inclusion around the book's critique of Judah and relativizes the importance of national identity in connection with definitive divine judgment and salvation. Destruction is announced against the Philistine city-states (2:5–7), Moab and Ammon (2:8–10), and Assyria

(2:13–15) because of past aggression against Israel/Judah, pride, or other reasons, and judgment has already fallen on the Cushites (2:12). In the middle of this section, however, the prophet announces that YHWH will also "starve all the gods of the earth," with the result that some among even the most distant non-Israelites will worship him (2:11), thereby avoiding or surviving his judgment (for a different interpretation, see Sweeney 2003, 142–143).

After noting that YHWH's past actions against the nations were intended to bring Judah to repentance and reformation (3:6–7), Zeph 3:8–13 similarly links the nations' future to Judah. The global judgment announced in 3:8, echoing the opening chapter, is shown to entail radical transformations of "the peoples" (*amim*, 3:9) and the Judeans alike (3:10–13). The fact that both groups are changed into faithful worshippers of YHWH (the peoples will "call upon the name of YHWH and serve him," 3:9; the remnant of Judah will "bring my offering," 3:10; and "seek refuge in the name of YHWH," 3:12) assigns to both groups a single criterion of identity, that of a restored relationship with YHWH. While national categories do not cease to exist in this final scenario, their importance is sharply relativized in Zephaniah's vision of a future humanity purified of wrongdoing and characterized by peaceful relationships with one another and with YHWH.

Obadiah

The three parts of Obadiah (1–9, 10–15, 16–21) present three different perspectives on non-Israelites and arguably stem from three close but distinct periods: just before, immediately after, and a few decades or so after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE (see Assis 2014 for a helpful survey of proposals for the book's formation). The first unit (1–9) makes no mention of Judah and focuses exclusively on the relationship between Edom and other nations. While some of these nations acted like Edom's "allies" and were at peace with it, they simultaneously planned to dominate or destroy it (7–9). Their deception and violence are neither (p. 140) exonerated nor condemned by the author, who instead strongly condemns Edom for its pride (3).

In the second unit (10–15) the author condemns Edom for the violence against its "brother Jacob" that it perpetrated or participated in (11–12). It is very unlikely that the "strangers" and "foreigners" who destroyed Jerusalem (1:11) are without guilt (interestingly, Babylon goes unnamed); in this way, Edom and these other nations could be placed in the same category, though the author maintains a focus on Edom due to its hereditary ties to Judah.

The third unit (16–21) nearly absorbs Edom in the larger group of the nations who have expatriated, killed, and looted Judeans (15–16), although Edom alone is named in this last section (the Philistines in 19 are part of a territory designation). In the Day of YHWH, Israel's past and present regional enemies will be destroyed (16) or dispossessed (19–20) and YHWH will establish his reign once and for all.

Haggai

Despite the clearly Persian context of Haggai (Hag 1:1; likewise Zechariah and Malachi; probably Joel as well), that empire remains almost invisible in the postexilic books of the Twelve (see Hagedorn [2020] on Persia in the Twelve). That being said, the first of two passages in which the nations appear almost certainly includes Persia in the group of "all the nations," whom YHWH will shake when he shakes heaven and earth (2:6–7). This "shaking" will end the nations' aggression against YHWH's people, strike fear in their hearts, and create a subgroup among them that recognizes YHWH's unique deity (Kessler 1987). In terms very relevant to Haggai's audience, the response of some of the nations to YHWH's actions will be to adorn his temple with their wealth as his vassals (2:7).

The nations appear only one more time in Haggai, and in a very different role. The oracle to Zerubbabel in 2:20–23 shows that not all nations submit to YHWH when he shakes them (2:21). While the role of the nations in 2:6–9 is tied to their wealth, here non-Israelites are repeatedly identified as those who possess military strength and infrastructure and will deploy it against YHWH, albeit without success (2:22). These radically different characterizations of non-Israelites groups in the same chronological setting (when YHWH shakes heaven and earth) demonstrate that the author of Haggai sees the nations as a complex group, with some responding positively and others negatively to YHWH's eschatological intervention.

Zechariah

Like Haggai, Zechariah divides the nations into two subgroups, one of which recognizes YHWH's unique sovereignty and one of which does not. The identities and fates of these two groups are closely connected with Jerusalem and the temple as the seat of YHWH's rule.

(p. 141) Throughout the book, the author condemns numerous nations for various reasons. Some are "at ease" (Zech 1:15) with the destruction of Judah in which they played a role (Babylon is named in 2:7 [Heb. 2:11]; generically in 2:8 [Heb. 2:12], 7:14). Others are characterized by pride, worship of other gods, and excessive wealth (Tyre, Sidon, Hamath, and the Philistine city-states, 9:1–8; Greece in 9:13). Still others proudly misuse their power (e.g., Egypt and Assyria, 10:10–11). Finally and climactically, the author predicts that "all the nations of the earth" (12:3) will assault Jerusalem (12:1–9; 14:1–21). These enemies of YHWH and his people will be punished by measures that undo their power, deconstruct their pride, and destroy them (12:4, 6, 9; 12:12–13, 15). These same events will ensure the return of Israelite exiles (10:8–11), the long-term protection of the temple (9:8), and the material enrichment of Jerusalem's survivors (12:14).

This widespread destruction of the nations is complemented by an equally striking emphasis on a new relationship between some non-Israelites and YHWH and his people. Following an announcement of judgment against the nations that plundered Zion, 2:11 [Heb.

2:15], envisions that “many nations will join themselves to YHWH and will become [his] people,” thereby taking on the same religious identity as YHWH’s historic people. Later, in Zechariah 8, the superlative restoration and blessing of Judah in the future (8:15) will incline “many peoples and strong nations” to seek YHWH and entreat his favor (presumably with success) as they recognize that God is with them (8:20–23; cf. Gen 12:1–3). YHWH even promises to transform Philistines who are unclean in cultic terms into “a remnant” for him that is equivalent to a “clan in Judah” (9:7) and to bring peace to the nations as he rules them (9:10). The final acts by which YHWH establishes his kingdom in Zechariah 14 involve a similar transformation, with some of Jerusalem’s former attackers becoming worshippers who make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to worship “the King, YHWH of Hosts” (14:16). Their participation in the Feast of Booths identifies them with the eschatological Israelite remnant here and with nascent Israel at the exodus (Lev 23:42–43).

Joel

Joel depicts the nations in several roles and with very different characterizations spread across a wide but detailed diachronic canvas. In the past, Egypt (Joel 3:17 [Heb. 4:17]) was an ancient foe that, like Edom in the more recent past, oppressed Israelites. The most recent history of the returned Judeans saw them exiled by “all the nations” (3:2 [Heb. 4:2]). Currently, Joel’s audience knows the reproach of the nations due to the covenant sanctions under which they are suffering (2:17, 19) and faces a threat from an anonymous adversary (cf. “northerner” in 2:20) that threatens Yehud and other “peoples” (2:6) but unwittingly serves YHWH’s purposes (2:11).

Joel’s vision of the future has many aspects. In the near future, after YHWH restores his people (2:18–27) and destroys the proud non-Israelite aggressor (2:20), he will pour out his Spirit on “all flesh,” a category that very significantly includes Israelites and non-Israelites (2:28 [Heb. 3:1]; cf. Isa 66:16; Jer 25:30–33). As few other prophets (p. 142) do, Joel radically extends the effusion of YHWH’s Spirit beyond the Israelite focus of this act in other contexts (Num 11:29; cf. Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29). In keeping with this universal horizon, salvation is offered to any and all who “call on the name of YHWH,” without ethnic or national qualifications (Joel 2:32 [Heb. 3:5]) (Troxel 2003). At the same time, YHWH summons “all the nations” to judgment, with the guilty parties being identified as those who have mistreated Israel/Judah (3:4–8 [Heb. 4:4–8]).

The eschatological outcome of this concurrent judgment and salvation, which blends with the Day of YHWH (cf. 3:15 [Heb. 4:15] with 2:31 [Heb. 3:4]), involves the restoration of YHWH’s people (3:18, 20–21 [Heb. 4:18–20, 21]) and the destruction of their enemies (3:9–14 [Heb. 4:9–14]). While the nations that are defined as those who heed YHWH’s call to face him in combat are destroyed, those from among them who call on his name participate in the same deliverance as his repentant people. This religious/spiritual focus favors seeing the “strangers” who will never pass through Zion as enemies rather than as ethnic non-Israelites, a category unattested elsewhere in Joel (3:17 [Heb. 4:17]).

Malachi

Malachi has two predominant perspectives on the nations. One is radically negative but limited to Edom, appearing only in Mal 1:2–5. The other, in 1:6–14, is radically positive and surprisingly involves a contrast between other nations and the Judeans in Malachi's present and in the future.

Although in Genesis the character of Esau was merely nonelect, Edom as the people group descended from him had a long history of opposing elect Israel (cf. "wicked" in 1:5). (See Kaminsky [2007] for a helpful explanation of elect, nonelect, and anti-elect status.) In Malachi, this adversarial identity and role are fixed, exhibiting no change in the past, present, and future that YHWH recounts and predicts. The focus on Edom's political infrastructure suggests that the Edom tradition addresses structures of power rather than every descendant of Esau (note especially his reconciliation with Jacob, Gen 33:4–17). With that qualification in mind, in Malachi YHWH declares that he will ensure the destruction of Edom not only for its antipathy toward Israel/Judah (already emphasized by Obadiah) but also for the autonomy and disregard for YHWH shown by its intention to continue unfazed in the face of his judgments.

The rest of the nations in Malachi appear as the antithesis of the corrupt priests in Yehud who offer imperfect sacrifices and scorn YHWH's sacrificial cult (Mal 1:7–8, 12–13). Expressing the wish that this terribly flawed cult in Yehud would simply end, YHWH promises that his name will be great from east to west "among the nations," who will offer "a pure offering" wherever they are (1:11; see Kuhrt [2007] for the non-YHWHistic nature of non-Israelite worship in Achaemenid Persia). While the critique of the corrupt Yehud cult is not a complete rejection of Israelite worship, the two-pronged assertion that non-Israelites will offer an acceptable cult without coming to (p. 143) Jerusalem is revolutionary (cf. Isa 19:19) and radically relativizes the importance of the Levitical priesthood and the temple. The Israelite community in Yehud nonetheless maintains a qualified priority in God's economy, and the blessings promised to those who repent will prompt "all nations" (presumably those who worship YHWH, Mal 1:6–14) to recognize that they are blessed (3:12; cf. Zech 8; Ps 72:17; Gen 12:1–3).

Conclusions

The characterization of the nations in the Twelve is varied. It is never primarily ethnic and is always and primarily YHWH oriented. It can be static or dynamic, and one-dimensional or complex. These characterizations are inseparable from the nations' destinies (blessing/curse/neutral), which are determined by means of judicial mechanisms that involve Israel and especially YHWH and are primarily religious in nature (Zehnder 2005).

This diversity is best understood as related to the different chronological frames in which the nations are presented and the different ways in which non-Israelite groups are characterized.

The characterization of some nations is constant over time. This holds for their negative role in Hosea, Obadiah, and Malachi (Edom only), Nahum (Assyria only), and Habakkuk (Babylon only).
All nations that played an explicit role in the history of Israel/Judah did so as its enemies.
In the present of the texts' authors, most nations remain the enemies of Israel/Judah. Exceptions include those nations in Nahum and Habakkuk that, like Judah, are victims of imperial aggression; Persia, which goes without critique in Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Joel; and the city of Nineveh in Jonah.
At least some nations will be the enemy of Judah/Israel in the noneschatological future.
At least some nations will be the enemy of renewed Israel/Judah in the eschatological future.
At least some from among the nations will be reconciled to YHWH and to Israel/Judah in the eschatological future. This normally involves their taking on a defining Yahwistic religious characteristic.

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The Future in the Twelve

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay discusses the topic of the future within the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets. It begins with a review of recent streams of research on the future within the Twelve (messianism, Zion/Jerusalem/nations, Day of Yahweh, apocalyptic) and then outlines the major thematic contours of this topic within this prophetic corpus (conditions of the future, human response, prophetic future, and certainty). The essay concludes by focusing on two key passages (Mic 4–5 and Hag 2:10–23), which show the intersection of past, present, and future within prophecy, marking the prophetic as key to the transformation of the lives of the audience.

Keywords: Keywords: prophecy, Minor Prophets, eschatology, future, messianism, Day of Yahweh, apocalyptic

(p. 147) ONE of the key accomplishments of the critical age of Hebrew Bible scholarship has been a more disciplined search for the meaning of the ancient text within its original historical context. This goal was an important corrective to the premodern approach, which was driven by the interest of readers in the relevance of Hebrew Bible texts to their present theological and cultural contexts. The premodern period was dominated by the attention of Christian interpreters to the way the New Testament drew upon the Hebrew Bible, with particular focus on the way the Hebrew Bible provided promises that were fulfilled in Christ and the resulting Christian community. This approach to the Hebrew Bible is most obvious in Christian treatments of the prophetic books that were culled largely for evidence of a future age whether that of Christ's first or second advent (Hays 2012). Similar streams related to the Jewish future hope for nation and messiah can be discerned within the rabbinical writings of the premodern period (Novak 2008; Coggins and Han 2011). The correction of the critical age forced interpreters to take more seriously the significance of the text within its ancient context and give greater attention to the message of the prophets to their original audiences. This meant recovering the message of social justice and faithful worship, which was seen as the dominant message of the prophets.

Within Christianity this shift from future to present in the interpretation of the prophets influenced not only its more critical and liberal streams but also its more conservative and evangelical streams. It is this shift that captures the imagination of Walter Rauschenbusch, considered the father of the Social Gospel, who considered the Hebrew prophets and their social understanding of faith to be “the spiritual food that [Jesus] assimilated in his own process of growth” (Rauschenbusch 1907, 4). But it is also evident in more recent conservative approaches to the prophets, as seen in the general introduction to the prophets by Brent Sandy: “The nature of prophecy, then, is threefold—in descending order of prominence—prosecution, persuasion and prediction” (Sandy 2002, 131). A similar trend can be discerned within Judaism as reflected in Jill (p. 148) Jacob’s comment on the presence of virtue ethics in Jewish Scripture: “This is not the morality or the law of rules; it is rather the morality and the law of aspiration. This is the ethic portrayed by the biblical prophets” (Jacobs 2009, xiii). Such statements are foundational to calls to biblical readers to consider the majority of the original message of the prophets to their audiences.

This important correction over the past two centuries certainly has provided greater exposure to the message of the Hebrew Bible for interpreters, but it has led to the perception that prophetic literature is about the past and present and little to do with the future. The truth, however, is that the future dominates prophetic literature more than any other corpus or form in the Hebrew Bible. Of course, the past and present also play a role in prophecy, as prophets cite evidence of divine or human activity that provides foundation for the future, but it is the future which dominates, whether that future is immediate or distant. The Book of the Twelve is no exception. For example, Hos 11 begins in the past, tracing Yahweh’s gracious initiative toward Israel in Egypt (11:1), Israel’s rebellion (11:2), and Yahweh’s care for Israel in the land (11:3–4). This is foundational, however, for a shift in 11:5 to the future, as Yahweh announces the coming threat of Assyria (11:5–7) followed by his gracious response (11:8–11). This is one of many passages in the Book of the Twelve that shift back and forth between past and future with the future always the dominant temporal orientation.

This emphasis on the future can be discerned in the study of the prophetic literature throughout its history. Research has focused much attention on topics such as messianism, the Day of Yahweh, and eschatological systems.

Interest in messianism dates prior to the turn of the eras, as attested, for example, in the Qumran scrolls and their use of Zech 4 to point to the expectation of messianic figures, priestly and royal (Evans 1999). Early Christianity used the same passage in Zech 4 as the basis for a future expectation of the appearance of two prophetic figures in Rev 11 (Strand 1982). There is an enduring stream of research within modern study of prophetic literature which continues this early focus on messianism (Pomykala 1995; Laato 1997). The Twelve contain some of the most important passages related to this discussion, especially Hos 3:5; Mic 5:2–5 [Heb. 5:1–4]; Hag 2:20–23; Zech 3:8; 4:14; 6:9–15; 9:9–10; cf. Amos 9:11–15. There is some tension, however, in the presentation of royal messianism, as future royal status is connected to both human figures from the Davidic line (refer-

ences above) but also to Yahweh in Mic 2:13; 4:7; Zech 14:9, 16–17; cf. Zech 12:1–13:6; (Boda 2007; Redditt 2009).

Gowan argues that Zion lies at the center of Hebrew Bible eschatology and so Jerusalem and Zion have also been the focus of much study on the Twelve, both individually or as a corpus (Gärtner 2012; Biddle 2012; Nogalski 2012). Key passages include Joel 2:32 [Heb. 3:5]; 3:1, 16, 17, 20, 21 [Heb. 4:1, 16, 17, 20, 21]; Obad 17, 21; Mic 4; Zeph 3:16; Zech 1:16–17; 2:4 [Heb. 2:8]; 2:10 [Heb. 2:14]; 2:12 [Heb. 2:16]; 8:3, 4, 8, 22; 9:9–10, 13; chaps. 12–14; Mal 3:4.

Closely linked with the theme of Jerusalem/Zion is that of the nations, often featured in future conflict with Jerusalem/Zion but also as drawn or submitted to Jerusalem/Zion. Recent work on the Twelve traces the theme of the nations, not only as the focus of (p. 149) the past and present for the prophetic messages but also as key to their future vison (Zapff 2003, 292–312; Roth 2005; Petersen 2011; Wöhrle 2008; Nogalski 2012; Timmer 2015, 225).

The Day of Yahweh has been another key focus in the study of the future in the Twelve. The phrase “day of Yahweh” (*yom YHWH*) is used in Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 2:31 [Heb 3:4]; 3:14 [Heb 4:14]; Amos 5:18–20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; and Mal 3:23, while similar phrases occur elsewhere, including “day belonging to Yahweh” in Zech 14:1; the “day of Yahweh’s wrath” in Zeph 1:18; the “day of Yahweh’s anger” in Zeph 2:3, the “day of Yahweh’s feast” in Zeph 1:8; and the “days of punishment/retribution” (Hos 9:7). The phrase “(on) that day” is used at regular intervals throughout the Twelve:

> Hos 1:5; 2:18 [Heb 2:16], 2:20 [Heb 2:18], 23 [Heb 2:21], 3:18 [Heb 4:18];

Amos 2:16; 8:3, 9, 13; 9:11; Obad 8; Mic 2:4; 4:6; 5:10; 7:11; Zeph 1:9, 10, 15; 3:11, 16; Hag 2:23; Zech 2:11 [Heb. 2:15]; 3:10; 9:16; 11:11; 12:3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11; 13:1, 2, 4; 14:4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20, 21, as is the phrase “in those days” (Joel 2:29 [Heb. 3:2]; 3:1 [Heb. 4:1]; Zech 8:6, 10, 23), and the terms “(the) day” (Joel 1:15; Zeph 2:2; 3:8), “the coming day” (Amos 4:2; Mal 4:1 [Heb. 3:19]), and “the day which I am preparing” (Mal 4:3 [Heb. 3:21]). Similar terms can also be found in the other prophetic collections of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Isa 2:12; 13:6, 9; 22:5; 34:8; Jer 46:10; Ezek 7:19; 13:5; 30:3) (Cathcart 1992).

This day has been treated in varying ways in modern scholarship, ranging from a day of Yahweh’s battle for and/or against Israel among the nations (e.g., von Rad 1959) to a ritual day arising from the cult of Israel (e.g., Mowinckel 1962), with some (e.g., Cross 1966) opting for a fusion of the two views (Boase 2006, 108). The dominant view has been that the eschatological dimension of this day is a development that arose in later times and is not the origin of the concept. This theme has proved important to recent work on the Twelve, both in terms of individual treatments of the use of these phrases in individual books (Boloje and Groenewald 2014; Beck 2005), as well as fuller treatments of the Twelve as a whole. Rendtorff uses the Day of Yahweh for his synchronic reading of the Twelve as a collection, pointing to connections between the day and other motifs such as repentance and salvation in the Twelve (Rendtorff 1998, 2000). For Rendtorff the topic of

the Day highlights cohesion and variation within the Twelve. Nogalski has also considered this motif in the Twelve to discern its implications for the unity of the collection (Nogalski 2003; see also Petersen 2002, 170, 211; Barton 2004). Nogalski's study of the books of Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah reveals close connections between these books among the Twelve, especially Joel and Obadiah.

Discussions of the genre of apocalyptic within biblical and Second Temple texts has impacted the study of the Twelve prophets. Attempts to identify the roots of this genre that finds its fullest expression in the later Second Temple period have isolated passages especially in the books of Joel and Zechariah as precursors. In particular, the night visions of Zech 1–6 are often identified along with texts found in Ezekiel and Daniel as (p. 150) proto-apocalyptic (Cook 1995). Relevant features in Zech 1–6 include the function of a heavenly figure in escorting the human prophetic figure, the use of symbolic visions to communicate the prophetic message, and the similar sociological dynamics of an oppressed community. In Zech 9–14, features identified are the cosmic and universal depiction of the future, the emphasis on divine agency for future salvation, and the expectation of international battles focused on Jerusalem (Hanson 1979). Such study of apocalyptic has often led to the conclusion that these texts in the Twelve are functioning in the same way as later Second Temple texts, which some have assumed depict a full-fledged eschatological expectation, that is an expectation of the end of time introducing a new age with little continuity with the past. Such eschatological perspective, however, has been questioned by Hebrew Bible scholars who consider eschatology as a late if not post-Hebrew Bible development, at least as traditionally defined (Boda 2007).

This article provides an opportunity for revisiting the topic of the future within the Twelve. After outlining the major contours of this topic within this key prophetic corpus, attention will turn to passages which show the intersection of past, present, and future, highlighting the key role that the prophecy played in the life of the people of Judah and Israel and marking the prophetic as key to the transformation of their lives. Prophecy was no milepost along the temporal journey of the people of God; it was a crossroads that would determine their future and that of their descendants.

Aspects of the Future in the Twelve

The future is a period for both divine and human activity. Through prophetic warning the people are reminded of approaching judgment from God while through prophetic promise the people are encouraged that God will provide salvation for their predicament. Prophetic exhortations through imperatives provide patterns for future human activity that will avert divine judgment, while prophetic descriptions of the future at times provide insight into an ideal future of human faithfulness and response to Yahweh. The future, whether depicted as positive or negative, can serve as a powerful motivation for the present, a carrot to encourage normative response.

Conditions of the Future among the Twelve

Prophets among the Twelve speak of the future in terms of divine actions of salvation or judgment. Both promises and warnings serve a rhetorical role to prompt and foster covenant faithfulness within the intended audiences. The message of judgment is most often directed toward the people of God, whether Israel or Judah, describing an approaching punishment for Israel. Divine judgment will affect various dimensions of human experience. The infrastructure essential to human survival and prosperity is often the target of judgment, whether that is the failure or theft of cultivated flora (Hos (p. 151) 2:9–12 [Heb. 2:11–14]; 8:7; 9:2; Amos 5:10–13; 7:1–3, 4–6; Mic 6:13–16; Zeph 1:2–13), or scarcity of food (Hos 4:10; Amos 6:7; Mic 6:13–16) and water (Hos 13:15; Amos 8:4–14). Divine judgment includes lack of shelter (Amos 5:10–13; Zeph 1:2–13) and failure of health (Mic 6:13–16). Regions which had been cultivated for human activity are invaded by wild and rural landscapes, flora, and fauna (Hos 2:9–12 [Heb. 2:11–14]; 9:6; 10:8; Mic 1:3–7; 3:12). Territory once secured by Israel and Judah will be lost to others (Amos 6:13–14; 7:17; Mic 2:1–5) and fortified cities and their buildings will be invaded and destroyed (Hos 8:14; 10:14; 11:6; Amos 2:4–5; 5:6; 6:8–11; Mic 1:3–7; 2:1–5; 3:12; Zeph 1:14–18; Zech 14:1–2), along with their homes (Amos 3:12–15; 6:8–11; Zech 5:4). Sacred sites will be demolished (Hos 10:2, 8; Amos 3:12–15; 7:7–9; chap. 9), their sacred articles destroyed and appropriated (Hos 10:2, 5–6; Amos 3:12–15; Mic 1:3–7; Zech 5:11; 13:2–6), and their sacred rituals and activities terminated (Hos 2:9–12 [Heb. 2:11–14]; 10:8; Amos 8:4–14). Treasures will be confiscated (Hos 13:15; Mic 1:3–7; Zeph 1:2–13). At times the prophets depict divine judgment in terms of disruptions to various processes of creation ranging from earthquakes and volcanoes, to solar, lunar, and stellar eclipses, to shifts in water bodies and courses (Joel 2:1–11; Amos 5:18–20; 8:4–14; Mic 1:3–7; Zeph 1:14–18). This list of threats to the infrastructure necessary for human existence reveals the seriousness of future divine judgment designed to prompt repentance and faithfulness from the audience.

Within the Twelve divine judgment also targets humans directly. Leadership figures, including kings, prophets, and priests, are warned of approaching injury, shame, death, or removal (Hos 10:15; 13:11; Amos 7:7–9; Mic 3:6–7; 4:14 [Heb. 5:1]; 6:13–16; Zeph 1:2–13; Zech 10:1–3a; 11:1–17; 13:7–9; Mal 2:3). The same fate awaits also the broader community (Hos 7:16; 13:16; Amos 2:6–16; 5:3, 18–20; 6:8–11; 7:17; 8:1–3, 4–14; chap. 9; Mic 1:8–16; 6:13–16; Zeph 1:2–13, 14–18; Zech 13:7–9; 14:1–2; Mal 2:12; 4:1 [Heb. 3:19]). Forced migration is a consistent feature in prophetic warnings (Hos 8:8, 13; 9:3, 6, 17; Amos 4:1–3; 5:25–27; 6:7; 7:17; chap. 9; Mic 1:8–16; 4:10; Zeph 1:2–13; Zech 14:1–2). Prophets speak of an approaching lack of human fertility (Hos 9:14, 16; 13:16).

Finally, the Twelve also warns of future judgment in terms of human access to the deity. Hosea 5:6, 15 warns of the withdrawal of the presence of God from the community. Amos 8:4–14; Mic 3:4, 6–7 describe a lack of access to revelation from God, especially through prophecy.

Prophetic warning looks to a possible dystopic future for those who do not adopt the priorities of Yahweh, and the negative consequences touch upon every aspect of human ex-

perience. But warning is not the only message of the Twelve concerning the future. Regularly, the prophets within the Twelve promise salvation for the people of God. Again, the infrastructure necessary for human life dominates the prophetic redemptive vison of the future. Prophets among the Twelve promise harvest from the key types of cultivated flora of the land of Israel, including vineyards, orchards, and crops which will produce wine, oil, fruit, and grain for human consumption (Hos 2:14–23 [Heb. 2:16–25]; Joel 2:14, 19, 22, 24, 25; 3:17–21 [Heb. 4:17–21; Amos 9:13–15; Mic 4:1–5; Hag 2:15–19; Zech 3:10; 8:9–13). These prophets promise plentiful provision of water (Joel 2:23; 3:17–21 [Heb. 4:17–21) and food (Joel 2:26). Cosmic upheaval and disruptions are also associated (p. 152) with the prophetic vision of a positive future for the people of God (Joel 2:30–31 [Heb. 3:3–4]; Mic 4:1–5; Hag 2:6–9, 21–23; Zech 14:2b–21).

According to these prophets, foreign military activity will be defeated and their political control overthrown by Yahweh (Joel 2:20; 3:1, 17-21 [Heb. 4 :1, 17–21]; Mic 4:13; Nah 1:15; Zeph 2:9b; 3:14–20; Hag 2:21–23; Zech 2:6–13 [Heb. 2:10–17]; 9:8–17; 10:3b–6; 14:2b–21). The people of God will be victorious over other nations (Obad 17–21; Mic 4:13; . 5: 9–14 [Heb. 5:10–15]; Zech 9:8–17; 10:3b–6; Mal 4:2–3 [Heb. 3:20–21]). Foreign powers will come to Israel and Judah in submission as they seek resources and participate in worship (Mic 4:1–5; 7:11–13; Zeph 3:9–10; Zech 14:2b–21). This will result in the removal of military resources and activity from the people of God which, rather than being a sign of judgment, points to the peaceful conditions which will arise due to Yahweh's intervention (Hos 2:14–23 [Heb. 2:16–25]; Mic 4:1–5; 5:9–14 [Heb. 5:19–15.]; Zech 9:8–17). The prophetic future includes the reconstruction and renewal of urban centers, especially Jerusalem (Amos 9:11–12, 13–15; Mic 7:11–13; Zech 1:16–17; 4:9; 6:9–15). This renewal will be financed by the economic resources of the nations (Hag 2:6–9). The political leadership of Jerusalem over the nations will be restored and established (Mic 4:8; Zeph 2:9b; Zech 14:2b–21) with an extension of the boundaries of Israel/Judah (Amos 9:11–12; Mic 7:11–13; Zeph 2:7, 9b; Zech 9:8–17). Sacred activity will be restored in the future era (Joel 2:14; Nah 1:15; Zech 8:19).

This positive future within the Twelve is also depicted as impacting the people of God directly. The people will be restored to the land, reversing an earlier forced migration (Hos 2:14–23 [Heb. 2:16–25]; 11:10–11; Joel 3:5 [Heb. 4:5]; Amos 9:13–15; Obad 17–21; Mic 4:6–7, 10; 5:1–4 [Heb.5:2–5]; Zeph 2:7, 9b; 3:9–10,[1] 14–20; Zech 2:1–5 [Heb 2:5–9]; 6:9–15; 8:1–8, 9–13; 9:8–17; 10:3b–6, 7–12). Even the remnant living among the nations will thrive (Mic 5:6-8 [Heb. 5:7–9]). The people will experience healing (Hos 6:1–2; 14:4; Mal 4:2–3 [Heb. 3:20–21]). The people's shame will be removed (Joel 2:19, 267, 27; Zeph 3:11–13) even as shame comes upon their enemies (Mic 7:15–16). God's people will experience joy (Zeph 3:14–20; Zech 2:14 [Heb. 2:10]; 9:9) and comfort (Zech 1:16–17). Israelite and Judean leadership, especially the Davidic line, will be restored (Mic 4:8; 5:1–5 [Heb. 5:2–6]; Hag 2:21–23; Zech 3:7, 8; 4:9; 6:9–15; 9:8–17). Inappropriate sacred personnel, including false prophets and illicit priests, will be removed (Mic 5:9-14 [Heb. 5:10–154]; Zech 13:2–9). Sin will be eradicated (Zech 3:9; 13:1) and the covenant renewed (Zech 8:1–8; 13:7–9).

Human access and experience of God is key to the prophets' vision of the future. Prophets among the Twelve promise a restoration of the presence of God (Joel 2:27; Zeph 3:14–20; Zech 2:1-5 [Heb. 5–9], 6-13 [Heb. 10–17]; 8:1–8; 9:8–17) as well as the pouring out of God's spirit upon the community (Joel 2:28–29 [Heb. 3:1–2]; Zech 12:10).

This evidence from the prophets of the Twelve highlights their dominant focus on the future of the people of God. But as seen in the earlier review, this future naturally intersects with the future of the nations beyond Israel and Judah. As seen for the future of the people of God, so also the prophetic vision of the future of the nations is both negative and positive. Clearly the emphasis is on the future punishment of the nations, described in similar ways to the judgment anticipated for Israel and Judah. One finds depictions of the nations gathered or gathering for military encounter or judgement (Joel 3:2 [Heb. 4:2], 8–16; Mic 4:11–13; Zeph 3:8; Zech 12:1–9; chap. 14) but also Yahweh marching to defeat the nations (p. 153) (Zech 9:1–8). Nations that will be judged by Yahweh include Aram, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Assyria, Babylon, Ethiopia, and Egypt (Joel 3:4-7 [Heb. 4:4–7]; Amos 1:3–2:4; Obadiah; Jonah; Nahum; Zeph 2:4–5, 9, 12, 13–15; Zech 1:18–21 [Heb. 2:1–4.], 6–9 [Heb.10–13]; 9:1–8; 10:11; Mal 1:2–5). Judgment of the nations also includes cosmic disruptions (Joel 3:8-16 [Heb.4:8–16]; Hab 3; Zeph 1; 3:8; 10:11), pestilence and plague (Hab 3; Zech 14), sociological upheaval (Zech 2:6-9 [Heb. 2:10–13]), slavery (Joel 3:4-74 [Heb. 4:4–7]), loss of human life (Zeph 1; 2:4–5), and urban infrastructure (Zeph 2:4–5, 9, 13–15).

But the prophets of the Twelve also envision at times a positive future for the nations beyond Israel and Judah, even if this positive future is possible only once the positive vision for Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem is realized. Micah 4:1–5 depicts nations coming to Jerusalem for justice. Jonah 4 reveals that Yahweh's gracious character has implications for a foreign entity like Nineveh. Zephaniah 3:9–10 looks to a future of people from Ethiopia with purified lips who will serve Yahweh.[2] Zechariah 2:11 [Heb. 2:15] points to many nations joining themselves covenantally to Yahweh while 8:20–23 identifies peoples and inhabitants from many nations coming to Jerusalem, drawn by the presence of God. Zechariah 14:16 envisions nations included in the yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths, while Mal 1 presages a day when Yahweh will enjoy fame and worship throughout the world (vv. 5, 11).

The prophetic future within the Twelve has implications for both the people of God (Israel, Judah) as well as the nations. Unquestionably this future has a negative dimension as the prophets warned humanity of approaching judgment. But there is also a consistent vision of a positive future, employing promise of idyllic conditions.

The Future as the Period of Human Response

Both negative and positive dimensions of the prophetic future are used for rhetorical ends, to prompt an embrace of the calls of the prophets to obedience and faithfulness, and thus the future is the period of opportunity for the prophet's audience to respond. This future opportunity is often expressed through the common hortatory speech found

throughout the prophetic books. This can be in the form of a prohibition, such as in Hos 4:15 when Israel is to “not let Judah become guilty, also do not go up to Gilgal, or go up to Beth-aven and take the oath: ‘As Yahweh lives!’.” Hosea 6:1–3 provides a cohortative invitation to “return to Yahweh” and to “press on to know Yahweh.” Very common is the direct command to action as in Hos 10:12: “Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap steadfast loyalty, loosen your fallow ground, for it is time to seek Yahweh.” But also conditional language is used to call for future response from the people, such as in Zech 3:7:

> If in my ways you walk
>
> and if my priestly-obligation you keep,
>
> and also if you yourself render justice at my house,
>
> and also if you take care of my courts,
>
> then I will give to you those with access among these standing ones.

(p. 154) Thus, as they cry out to their present audience, the prophets are especially concerned with the immediate future, which is the period for human response to their message which has significance for the more remote future they see approaching.

Prophetic Future and Certainty

This prophetic value on the importance of the immediate future to what would follow prompts further reflection on the nature of the future within the prophetic tradition. It is important to remember that the future in prophetic literature is not necessarily set in stone. Habakkuk 2:3 does link the vision of Habakkuk with a particular time, describing how it testifies to its goal and will not deceive or fail. Because of the future certainty of the vision the audience is encouraged to wait for it, even as it delays. Such a “delay” thus suggests flexibility in fulfillment and this flexibility is evidenced at a couple of other places in the Twelve. Jonah’s prophetic warning (3:4) is averted through the Ninevites’ penitential activity and Yahweh’s gracious response (3:10). The elders of the land in Jer 26:17–19 use the example of Micah’s prophetic warning of destruction to Hezekiah in Mic 3:12 to show that the earlier king’s positive[3] response to the message mitigated the announced divine judgment.[4] The visions Amos receives in 7:1–6 are avoided by prophetic intercession resulting in Yahweh’s change of mind. This evidence shows us that the prophetic future can be altered by human response or human mediation.

Dynamics on the divine level also can impact the future envisioned by the prophets. Joel 2:13 and Jonah 3:9 use the phrase “who knows?” and Zeph 2:3 the word “perhaps” to signal the ambiguity of the divine response to human penitential activity. It appears that the reason for a shift in the promised or warned future can also lie in the deity who according to Exod 33:19 retains sovereignty over dealings with humanity. The character of Yahweh rehearsed in Exod 34:5–6 is carefully transformed in the Twelve (Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2) to remind the audience of God’s ability to “change” for opportunities of sovereign compassion. The prophetic texts replace the word “faithfulness” (*emit*) from the ancient liturgy of

Yahweh's character with the phrase "one who relents concerning calamity," revealing that steadfast love that is compassionate and gracious at times involves a shift in divine intention in order to accomplish the kind of faithfulness envisioned.

The perspective drawn from these prophetic texts may explain examples such as the clear reversal of the Jeremianic judgment of Jehoiachin (Jer 22:24–30) in Hag 2:20–23 with its declaration of the restoration of Zerubbabel as Yahweh's signet ring. This means that even though judgment is warned and human penitential response is not forthcoming (Hos 11:1–7), Yahweh's sovereign compassion remains a factor:

> How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within me, all my compassions are kindled. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. (Hos 11:8–9)

(p. 155) Past, Present, and Future in the Twelve

The earlier sections have reviewed the basic contours of the future displayed among the Twelve and discussed some of the key dynamics related to the future. In doing so it has become clear that the future cannot be extracted from the past and present. They are inextricably linked. Two passages among the Twelve which highlight the creative prophetic modulation between past/present and future are Mic 4–5 and Hag 2:10–23.

Micah 4–5 flows naturally out of the devastating prophetic judgment that concludes Mic 3:

> Therefore, because of you Zion will be plowed as a field
>
> and Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins
>
> and the temple mount will become a forest. (3:12)

This judgment was expected in the time of Micah, who lived during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Judean kings who faced serious challenges from the north, at first from Israel and Aram during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and later from Assyria during the invasion of Sennacherib. As noted earlier, Jer 26:19 highlights how Yahweh changed his mind concerning this judgment due to the intercession of Hezekiah, but those responsible for the book of Micah (and possibly the Twelve) recognized the relevance of Micah's prophecy for a later generation. What follows then in Mic 4–5 is material that presents a prophetic vision which modulates between various time periods (Boda 2014). A future period is signaled by the term "day" (Mic 4:1, 6; 5:10 [Heb. 5:9]), but other periods also appear to be in view as one looks closely at the use of the term "now" (4:9, 10, 11; 5:1 [Heb. 4:14]; 5:4 [Heb. 5:3]). This "now" has various referents. In 4:9–10 it introduces an encouragement to those living at the moment of the defeat of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon,

promising Yahweh's rescue after the exile. In 4:11–13 it introduces an encouragement to those living at the moment of the threat against Jerusalem by Assyria led by Sennacherib, a moment when Zion's enemy was defeated. In 5:1 [Heb. 4:14] the "now" is most likely that of the Babylonian period (4:9–10), although it could reflect the Assyrian period (4:11–13). The term "now" is also associated with the future ideal period introduced in 4:1–5, as seen by its use in 4:6–7, looking to Yahweh's reign "from now on and forever." This ideal future "now" is also in view in 5:4 [Heb. 5:3] as the Davidic royal figure reigns alongside Yahweh. Tracking the term "now" throughout Mic 4–5 highlights the temporal creativity of prophetic literature and the way the past, present, and future fuse together.

Another passage that shows the creative intertwining of past, present, and future is Hag 2:10–23 (Boda 2000). The prophetic material in these verses is all dated to the same date: the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of the second year of the Persian king Darius. The first pericope focuses on the past, using a dialogue between the prophet and priests regarding a priestly *torah* ruling to condemn the community for their inappropriate sacrifices, most likely due to the lack of reconstruction of the temple (2:10–14). (p. 156) The final pericope (2:20–23) clearly focuses on the future, a period identified as "that day" in 2:23, which will see the political and military power of the nations of the earth overthrown and the Davidic house functioning as Yahweh's vice regent on earth. What lies between these two pericopes, however, is a declaration pronounced on what is identified as "now" in 2:15 as well as "this day" (v. 15), "before one stone was placed on another" (v. 15), "this day" (v. 18), " the 24^{th} day of the 9^{th} month" (v. 18), "the day when the temple of Yahweh was founded" (v. 18), "this day" (v. 19). The emphasis on the "now" of this "day" is clear throughout, and it is this "now" which is identified as key to the transformation from a past of uncleanness and lack to a period of blessing (v. 19b) and universal transformation (vv. 20–23). The "now" in Haggai is a singular now, a focused moment in the present in which human response to Yahweh's challenge has the potential to transform the future.

Consideration of these two passages provides a fitting conclusion to this study of the future in the Twelve Prophets. They reveal the power of the prophetic, whether oral or written, to work across moments of time to emphasize the current opportunity of its audience. The past and especially the future, whether immediate or remote, are leveraged for a prophetic message to shape the present audience's patterns of living and trusting.

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Notes:

(1.) There is some debate over whether this group refers to the remnant of Israel/Judah or foreign nations now submitting to Yahweh (Roberts 1991, 217–218; Sweeney 2000, 2:522; Nogalski 2011, 753).

(2.) See previous note.

(3.) See further the fine review of Brent Sandy after reviewing cases in the Hebrew Bible where prophetic predictions are fulfilled: “Prophecies may…have a measure of uncertainty about fulfillment, be inherently translucent, give incomplete or enigmatic information, employ stereotypical language, conceal long spans of time, predict something that does not happen as expected, be given in poetic verse, be fulfilled transparently” (Sandy 2002, 147).

(4.) For the underlying theology of human response to change prophetic fulfillment, see Jer 18:7–10.

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The Problem of “Justice” as Social Criticism in the Twelve Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay considers the theme of justice in the Minor Prophets. The Hebrew term *mishpat* is prominent in some of the prophetic voices in the Twelve, notably Amos and Micah, where criticism of the Israelite or Judean people but especially the leadership is typically the context for discussions of justice. However, modern commentary literature often proposes that ideas of “justice” are nevertheless implied in those prophetic texts where the Hebrew term itself does not appear—and even in those individual voices or portions that do not include any criticism of the people and their leaders but only foreign peoples. This raises some difficult issues when attempting to read the Book of the Twelve as a single work, forcing commentators to explain why these two ideas—justice and social criticism—do not appear in virtually half of the prophetic voices featured in the work. Is the significance of “justice” a casualty of a proposed “final form” of the Book of the Twelve?

Keywords: Keywords: justice, Amos, Micah, social criticism, mishpat, commentary literature, foreign peoples

IN a recent summary of work on the Twelve Prophets, Jakob Wöhrle noted that during the 1990s, “Old Testament scholarship found a new object” (Wöhrle 2012, 3). Rather than study the smaller books of the Prophets one at a time, even if commentaries were often already published together in a single volume (as has been typical for some time, e.g., Robinson and Horst 1954, research summary in Nogalski & Sweeney 2000, x, n.5), this recent “object” is the investigation of the editing and completion of “the Twelve” as a *single work*. The notion is also helpfully summarized by Wöhrle in that same essay, and this perspective is already featured in general texts such as Brueggemann and Linafelt (2003, 241–246; cf. Smith-Christopher 2015, 40–42). There certainly remains continued dissent from abandoning an emphasis on each individual book, however. O’Brien states, directly, that “the arguments for the unity of the Twelve are not finally convincing” (O’Brien 2004, 19), although she acknowledges many similarities between the individual portions, suggesting that “These similarities may derive from a common editor, but they may also indicate that the prophetic books were written, and circulated, within a small scribal

circle” (O’Brien 2004, 19). One can acknowledge, then, that an individual book may reveal signs of editing as part of the Twelve as a whole without necessarily abandoning the view that a book is composed of diverse, indeed prophetic, material. In short, historical-critical (and typically diachronic) approaches are not necessarily being entirely replaced by form-critical and “final form” approaches to the Twelve as a whole.

Work on the Twelve as a final complete work, however, also helpfully emphasizes unifying *ideas* that run through the entire collection. In a recent essay, one of the most (p. 160) prominent scholars of the Twelve as a whole work, James Nogalski, writes about the notion of such “unifying ideas,” including the following important observations:

> Righteousness and justice—how one relates to God and human beings—are the hallmarks by which humanity in general, and God’s people in particular, shall be evaluated. The prophets challenge God’s people in times of crises in order to elicit a change in behavior… .The crimes for which God’s people must repent include the use of idolatrous elements in worship (Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, and Malachi), not paying attention to worship/temple issues (Haggai), and issues surrounding social ethics (Hosea, Amos, and Habakkuk). (Nogalski 2017, 192–193)

Notably, justice is *not* discussed as one of Nogalski’s overarching themes within a proposed Book of the Twelve. The fact that this theme is absent among his survey of such themes, as well as missing from many other scholars’ proposed “unifying” themes (e.g., Schart 2000; Kessler 2016)—and the fact that *mishpat*/justice is not listed among a proposed common vocabulary—is the central issue taken up in this essay. How, then, is “justice” to be understood in the context of a proposed work called “the Twelve”?

Mishpat and Social Justice

At one time, the study of a concept like justice in particular books of the Bible was a relatively straightforward undertaking. One thinks of the brief survey of social justice in the entire Hebrew Bible by Malchow (1996) or Weinfeld’s classic study of social justice (in English, 1995). However, if the discussion is to be focused on particular books, one would simply begin with identifying the lexicography of the concept (in this case, *mishpat* but perhaps including a term often used in combination with it, such as *tzedakah*, “righteousness”) and then discussing various uses and contexts. Recent work on the proposed editing of the Twelve Prophets as a whole, however, has complicated this form of lexical analysis. Not only must we be attentive to uses of “justice” in separate prophetic “books” (even the identification of prophetic “books,” as opposed to random phrases influenced by Deuteronomic thought, is contested, so Gerstenberger, 2011, 310–311, even stronger in 2015), but we also need to take particular note of the career of words in the combined work and therefore note *absence* as well as presence. That is, if the Twelve is increasingly analyzed as a single work, where specific terms like *mishpat* appear is no more important than where they do *not* appear. Particularly interesting diachronic and

historical-critical issues are raised with regard to the presence and absence of the term *mishpat* in the Twelve.

Does the book we call “the Twelve” sustain a biblical theology of social justice? Or does it relegate such issues to “a more appropriate time in the past” while more pressing issues are demanding our attention now, such as punishing foreign nations that caused “us” such harm? One need only point to the frequency of relegating the famous “peace (p. 161) passage” of Isa 2//Mic 4 to some safely distant future to see the impact of such chronological dismissal of beating swords into plowshares in biblical themes for theological reflection (Smith-Christopher 2015, 128–145).

This essay will proceed in clear steps. I will first engage in brief observations about the appearance of the key term *mishpat*, noting especially its use in the famously provocative rhetoric of social criticism (criticism especially of Hebrew leadership) in Amos and Micah. I will then take note of the widely noticed *absence* of both the term and its accompanying criticism of Hebrew leadership in writings *associated with* (even if not actually dated to) prophetic figures in both the eighth-century northern kingdom and Judah in the sixth and fifth centuries. I will finally take note of some of the more dramatic proposals for the redactional origins of the work we now call “the Twelve,” specifically in Gerstenberger’s recent work, and point out some of the implications of these redactional theories for a Biblical theology of social justice.

Mishpat in the Twelve Prophets

Given that any serious discussion of “justice” in a biblical text ought logically to use, at some point, the basic Hebrew term *mishpat*, I first consider its use. The term *mishpat* (almost always translated as “justice”) is used over four hundred times in the Old Testament. The books in which the term appears most frequently are Psalms, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and Jeremiah. In terms of concentrations of use, the majority of uses appear in the Major Prophets, where nearly one-third (28 percent) of all uses of the term appear. Only twenty-seven occurrences, less than 7 percent of all occasions, appear in all the Twelve. Given that we are dealing with some of the shortest books in the Hebrew Bible, this observation is not surprising at first blush. When the number of uses is measured against the *number of verses*, however, the situation is rather dramatically different. A ranking of the books of the Bible where “justice” appears in a verse of that work, *as a percentage of total verses in the book as a whole* is as follows:

Zephaniah
Malachi
Habakkuk
Micah
Deuteronomy
Isaiah
Hosea
Ezekiel

Amos
Ecclesiastes

(p. 162) Six of the top-ten books are in the Twelve. When "justice" is calculated as a percentage of the number of *words* in the book, the result is equally interesting:

Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Micah
Psalms
Malachi
Proverbs
Job
Hosea
Deuteronomy
Isaiah

Books from the Twelve account for five out of ten, and had the list extended to the top twelve, Amos would have appeared after Ezekiel. Are these statistics a reliable support for the argument that justice is among the important concerns of many of the Book of the Twelve? To support such a case, the rest of the argument must turn to the context within which these discussions take place. It is convenient, then, to use our top-ten lists to focus our examinations of those books where the relevant term is most prominent: Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Micah, Malachi, Hosea, and Amos.

A representative look at verses from these books is revealing:

> Hos 5:1 Hear this, O priests! Give heed, O house of Israel! Listen, O house of the king! For the judgment pertains to you; for you have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.
>
> Hos 10:4 They utter mere words; with empty oaths they make covenants; so litigation springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.
>
> Amos 5:7 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!
>
> Amos 5:15 Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.
>
> Amos 5:24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
>
> Mic 3:1 And I said: Listen, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Should you not know justice?
>
> Mic 3:9 Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity.

> Zeph 2:3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the LORD’s wrath.
>
> Zech 7:9 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another;
>
> (p. 163) Zech 8:16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace.
>
> Mal 2:17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied him?” By saying, “All who do evil are good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them.” Or by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”
>
> Mal 3:5 Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

What seems immediately striking is the fact that *mishpat*/justice predominantly appears in contexts of *withering social criticism* of the Hebrews themselves and particularly their leaders. I included passages from Zechariah, even though it did not make our earlier top-ten lists, because in both cases where the term “justice” is used in Zechariah, it is arguably in reference to criticism of the Hebrew people themselves and thus in line with Amos and Micah.

Absence of *Mishpat* in the Twelve

An equally interesting series of observations arises when we consider where the key term for justice does *not* appear. Obadiah is hardly a surprise. Consisting largely of a one-chapter angry speech against the Edomites, one would hardly expect a spirited discussion of justice in the context of Obadiah’s highly nationalistic screed. The English word “justice” most certainly *does* appear, however, in modern *commentaries* dealing with writings such as Obadiah (as well as Nahum and Joel). For example, in his work on Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, Jenson begins his discussions about Obadiah by stating, “The primary message of Obadiah is that Yhwh’s justice will be established” (Jenson 2008, 7). He explains, “one key principle that pervades how this justice is worked out is the law of equivalent retribution (*lex talionis*)… This principle of ‘poetic justice’ is explicitly stated in Obad 15, but underlies the rest of the prophecy” (Jenson 2008, 8), apparently referring to the phrase: “As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head” (Obad 1:15, NRSV). Jenson seems to be referring to “retribution” but uses the term “justice” despite the fact that *the Hebrew term is not itself used* in Obadiah. In this case, Jenson’s proposed concept of “justice” doesn’t necessarily involve social criticism of the Hebrews (and their leaders) themselves.

This issue becomes even more important when we consider other "absences" of the term *mishpat.* Widely noted is the absence of any discussion of (or even sense of) justice in Nahum. Nahum is, of course, severely critical of Assyria, which is why it is often contrasted with Jonah's sense of hope that Assyrians will come to repent of their violence. But was the punishment of Assyria in Nahum based on a concept of "justice," (p. 164) even though the term is not used? O'Brien points out some difficulties in making such a presumption:

> Absent…are explanations of what Assyria did to overstep its bounds; apart from short, generic accusations of harlotry or multiplying traders, Assyria's crimes are not spelled out. Absent, too, are calls for Judah to repent and promises of her future restoration: Judah is only called upon to celebrate the fall of her enemy. (O'Brien 2007, 176)

Joel is equally nationalistic (though Wolff questions whether Joel's message *is* contrary to Mic 4//Isa 2; Wolff, 1992). Joel *seems* entirely concerned with revenge for the treatment of Judah, and thus it is hardly surprising that Joel 3:10 reverses the famous "peace passage" of Mic 4 (I argue that Isa 2 reused Mic 4 in Smith-Christopher 2015, 128–145). In this regard, Jonah is deeply ironic, since it seems to be a satire on precisely the nationalistic attitudes of a Joel, Nahum, or Obadiah: the character of Jonah "himself" exhibits no interest in criticism of Hebrews, and God's concern for "other" people is a hard lesson for the nationalist Jonah. Nahum, as already noted, is the very opposite of Jonah's satire. Before Jonah's "lesson" from God (although we do not know if Jonah ever learned from it), Jonah and Nahum would clearly have been ideological allies. In short, Nahum is far too nationalistic for the self-criticism that appears to be inherent in concepts of "justice" typical of Amos and Micah.

Modern commentary on Nahum and Joel has regularly tried to account for the absence of critical attitudes toward Hebrew behavior by calling these figures "cult prophets." Sweeney, however, disagrees with this designation of Nahum:

> Such a contention is based upon a very narrow view of the social role of prophets that maintains that true prophets in the pre-exilic period would only speak messages of judgment against Israel and Judah. (Sweeney 2000, vol. 2, 420)

Haggai, with his nationalist agenda of rebuilding the capital cities' shrine so that the nation's economy can get rolling again, finishes with a genuflection toward the new Davidide, Zerubbabel. Here again, the nationalist agenda appears to allow no discussion of "justice" in the context of social criticism of the Hebrews. In sum, in the material associated with the "minor prophets" where the term does *not* occur at all, these voices are far too busy condemning Israel's enemies to be bothered by internal corruption.

As already noted, however, in recent analysis of the Twelve, there is a strong reaction to this possible conclusion. Recent commentary literature wants to read *punishment of other nations* as itself a form of, or intimately associated with, ideas of "justice," and perhaps even a "unifying theme" of the Twelve as a whole. In her discussion of Zechariah, for ex-

ample, O'Brien points to the connection between internal critique and punishment of other nations. She argues that the message of justice only makes sense when:

> The past destruction of Israel and Judah must be seen as deserved; YHWH must be seen as having been willing and able to turn back the nations when punishment is (p. 165) complete; and YHWH must be understood as having promised that the people would someday be restored to their land. These are the underpinnings for the claims of the book of Zechariah. (O'Brien 2007, 171)

She speaks of later prophets who offer "hope" that "YHWH would defeat those who prevent his people from enjoying their land peacefully" (O'Brien 2007, 172). In fact, O'Brien wonders if a unifying principle of the entire work known now as the Twelve is precisely this "hope" of the punishment of offending nations, and she states that Obadiah's hope for punishment resonates "clearly with Zech 1" (O'Brien 2007, 173). She even proposes, with others (Sweeney 2000, vol. 2, 422) that Nahum is fully compatible with Jonah because (perhaps) Assyria once "had their chance" and must have later turned away from their willingness to forswear the "violence of their hands" (Jon 3:8). Similarly, McConville argued that:

> authority to judge is an entailment of the authority to rule. Ruling, judging, and delivering from oppression are once again closely bound up with each other. This deliverance is also close to "justice," a concept which is hard to disentangle from judgment, and which is many cases in the best translation of *mishpat*.(McConville 2004, 29)

He states even more directly, "*mishpat* refers not only to the justice incumbent on a society to do, but to the judgement as salvation that a beleaguered community awaits" (McConville 2004, 37).

Others have also proposed that it is precisely this kind of "hope" for punishment of other nations that unifies the Twelve. Anselm Hagedorn, for example, proposes that:

> Almost all prophetic books within the corpus of a Book of the Twelve contain oracles against foreign nations and some books like Obadiah and Nahum seem to be solely shaped by them. The sole exception here being Hosea. (Hagedorn 2012, 321)

However, Hagedorn suggests that if Hosea was understood to be a word against the Northern Kingdom, then from the perspective of a Judean readership it *also* is a vindictive celebration of punishment of others (Hagedorn 2012, 13). Similarly, Marshall Johnson argues that the "crisis" of Habakkuk was precisely the *absence of punishment* for Babylonian terrorism. Johnson thus believes that Habakkuk is raising serious questions about God's justice: "Habakkuk does not say that the *tora* has been broken and *mishpat* transgressed; he says that the *tora* has been paralyzed and warped" (Johnson 1985, 262). Peckham similarly concludes his analysis of additions (he called these additions "commentary") to older material in Habakkuk by arguing that these "commentaries" served to

clarify the message, stating that “the theory of divine retribution that the commentary developed (2:5–20) made the Torah completely effective and universally valid by insuring the inevitability of punishment … but it also meant that those who had suffered unjustly in the Babylonian captivity were finally vindicated by the destruction of the Babylonian empire (3:13–14)” (Peckham 1986, 636).

(p. 166) There is a potential problem with these concepts of “justice” which are proposed to encompass such ideas as “mass punishment” and “judgement.” For example, in his argument cited earlier, McConville draws attention to the interesting question of Abraham in the context of the debate about Sodom and Gomorrah: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (*mishpat*, Gen 18:25). McConville argues that such a question shows, even presumes, how close “justice” and “judgement” can be, given that the root of both terms is the same. Contrary to McConville’s claims, however, this same text could also be cited to argue that they are *quite different* since Abraham’s question clearly implies that “judgement” *can* occur without “justice.” Our discussion of punishment of “nations” and “peoples” in the Twelve raises precisely Abraham’s question again—a question that rings down through the centuries: Will the innocent suffer with the guilty? Are the throngs of armies, each exhausted foot soldier and every harassed cart driver, to be punished for the arrogance of kings and generals? I would suggest that too many modern commentaries express little interest in the profound criticism implied by Abraham’s questioning of God. Walter Houston has pointed to precisely this problem:

> This is the point on which the logic of the rhetoric of the prophetic books pivots. YHWH destroys oppressors; the oppressors denounced in the oracles of judgement were representative of the Israelite kingdoms; this accounts, in the structure of the prophetic books as wholes, for the downfall of those kingdoms. (Houston 2006, 94)

Nevertheless, Houston continues:

> We found difficulty with this logic in our study of Amos. The difficulty is not the implied understanding of injustice as social. That is profoundly correct. It is rather the global character of the punishment. “Doing justice and righteousness” ought to mean both destroyed oppressors and delivering the oppressed; yet YHWH in these texts is only said to destroy oppressors. If that leads to the deliverance of the oppressed, the texts do not usually say so, and in the global act of judgment on Israel and/or Judah the oppressed will inevitably suffer along with the oppressors. (Houston 2006, 94)

Debates over many prophetic passages tend to focus on precisely this problem. Is “justice” invariably tied to *punishment* of the unjust foreign *nations*? Or is justice the “way it is supposed to be,” which is to say: potential judgment on specific violators of law, whereas mass punishment is somehow unrelated? Is punishment perhaps an *alternative* way of thinking about justice? And if it is, surely it must be discerning. Houston locates the diffi-

culty in Amos, but others have pointed to additional texts, although not always raising Houston’s ethical objection.

Where the actual term for “justice” is used, it is predominantly associated in the Twelve with criticism of the Hebrews themselves, and occasionally punishment of specific Hebrews (and leaders) who violate Mosaic “justice.” Some books contain only (or like Amos, also include) punishment of other nations. Do our ideas of justice therefore have to be adapted to “fit” a predominant emphasis in those voices in the (p. 167) Twelve which deal only with punishment of enemy nations, a context where the term *mishpat* is notably *absent?* As we have seen, one way to effectively compensate for the presence of the typical term for “justice” is to reinterpret judgement and punishment to be a form of justice.

The Fate of “Justice” in Recent Critical Readings of the Twelve

Another approach is proposing a *chronological ordering* of ideas within the work as a whole. Recent proposals have suggested that a move from social criticism to vindictive, “patriotic” punishment characterizes the redactional intentions of the Twelve as a finished work. Such a reading is offered by Gerstenberger, who argues that the work we now know is a compilation of anonymous sayings (a “motley array” of voices, Gerstenberger 2011, 310). These sayings are perhaps from prophetic sources, but Deuteronomic influences could account for some of the ethical maxims. He further proposes that the intended purpose of the work as a whole was providing *liturgical readings* for postexilic worship services (Gerstenberger 2011, 310–320; Gerstenberger 2015, 119–136). Gerstenberger bases his arguments on the number of phrases that appear to reveal liturgical use (“we” statements that sound like “community oriented catechetical speech,” Gerstenberger 2015, 122–123). There are two interesting corollaries to this kind of argument: one dealing with the presumed editors and the other with a presumed chronological sequence of the work that they have created.

Gerstenberger, among others, seems to presume a professional scribal class serving the needs of centralized institutions of worship (even in exilic and/or diaspora contexts) in the final composition of the Twelve. Most significantly, he proposes that such worship took place by means of emphasizing a thematic sequence of “trial—repentance—rehabilitation” after which “the congregation (choir?) apparently sang hymns of praise” (Gerstenberger 2015, 135). Such a setting for these texts would definitely question any reading of the finished work as representing *socially critical* or *oppositional* arguments of social justice. If the Twelve moves from trial (with mistakes relegated to a past era), to repentance, and finally to rehabilitation (thus providing a proverbial happy ending), then social criticism is effectively banished to the past, since the most provocative critiques (namely Amos and Micah) belong to a *chronological* past.

Similar arguments have appeared elsewhere. In his discussion, Gibson proposes that later sections of the Twelve such as Joel, Obadiah, and Nahum do not “rebuke” the Hebrews themselves because they reflect the crisis of the Babylonian conquest and rule over Judea:

> The absence of any real rebuke in Joel is consistent with the view that he lived in the exilic period, when it would not have been appropriate to rebuke and criticize the people, who were in a state of deep despair. (Gibson 2016, 14)

(p. 168) One might note that Jeremiah or Ezekiel apparently did not receive the memo about taking it easy on the traumatized Judeans, but this chronological argument for the Twelve is clear enough: justice, especially when it is accompanied by a searing social criticism, was appropriate for the late Judean and Samarian monarchical periods, but supposedly not after the Assyrian and Babylonian tragedies.

Such an argument makes interesting assumptions about scribal politics. It assumes that scribes functioned only as employees of central institutions of worship (or monarchy) and thus communal meetings are the only viable contexts for prophetic-themed texts. It depicts scribes as refusing to “allow” a text to continue to offer criticism without giving it a more acceptable ending. Applying such assumptions elsewhere raises interesting questions. If a scribe named Baruch is responsible for a great deal of Jeremiah material, is Baruch to be thought of as a well-ensconced member of a sacral establishment—albeit a postexilic establishment? Would he necessarily have deflected or blunted Jeremiah’s social criticism precisely because he was a functionary of the very social or religious institutions that Jeremiah attacks? Or was he, perhaps, a *renegade* scribe? A *rogue* writer? A rare “writing dissenter”? These same questions can be raised about the “justice” texts of the Twelve. Would scribes concerned with worship necessarily prevent trenchant social criticism to be a legacy of their work? A discussion of scribal politics would take us into an entirely different direction, but I ask whether we need to examine our assumption that scribes were necessarily “conservative” defenders of an “establishment” perspective in all cases.

A related question deals with liturgical texts. Can liturgy and prayer also be socially critical? For example, the emphasis on the sins of “our ancestors” in the Penitential Prayers (e.g., Ezra 9:7; Neh 9:16; Dan 9:8) is arguably similar in spirit to Gerstenberger’s proposed ideas about “trial-repentance-rehabilitation” in the Twelve. These prayers emphasize the grave sins of the “ancestors” (usually assigned to the monarchical period) but also sometimes are offered in situations of grave concern about social problems among the Hebrew peoples at the time (e.g., the mixed marriage crisis in Ezra, where Ezra was severely critical of the community itself). The “Penitential Prayer” form appears as late as the book of Baruch, late into the Hellenistic period. It cites the sins of the past, again and again, as a way of suggesting that the current circumstances *might be* similar to the past so that “we must not allow this to happen again.” Citing “our” mistakes in *any* time period surely opens the possibilities of a continued problem.

Is the Twelve really a comforting condemnation of our present enemies that relegates the message of those previous prophets like Micah and Amos to the past and promotes a patriotic program? Is their social criticism dissolved by the reassuring nationalism of Obadiah and Nahum, once all are blended together into a liturgical whole? What if Amos and Micah cannot be so easily domesticated or safely deposited in the past?

In the sixth century, Jeremiah cites Micah as an eighth-century prophet (along with an otherwise unknown “Uriah”) to defend his own critical stance and warnings:

> Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, said to all the people of Judah: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as (p. 169) a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.” (Jer 26:18)

Rather than being relegated to the past, Micah’s criticism is being *unlocked from the past* to defend Jeremiah’s sense of “justice” as social criticism. Thus, prophetic voices have the ability to be reanimated, despite the chronological markers indicating their lifetime. If the Twelve is the result of careful editing of what was intended to be a comforting document, surely a more effective way to deal with the social criticism of Amos and Micah would have been to leave it out entirely—unless, of course, some of their words were historical messages known by enough people in “popular knowledge” to make it impossible to completely ignore these voices. In sum, reading the Twelve as one work *can* clearly have a homogenizing tendency which would blunt the genuinely dissenting and/or genuinely critical voices represented in these works, but surely it is not inevitably the case that it must be read this way.

Justice as Social Criticism

There have been some significant debates about the nature of justice in the Hebrew Bible generally, and specifically in the Prophets. For example, Malchow begins his analysis by stating directly that “the most striking statements on social justice in the Hebrew Bible appear in the prophetic books” (Malchow 1996, 31). Williamson, however, in *He Has Shown You What Is Good: Old Testament Justice*, underscores that the various prophets’ ideas of justice are not the same. He considers the book of Isaiah as representing a sense of “royal responsibility” toward just behavior that cannot be considered a critique of the social system of ancient Israel itself. Isaiah’s concerns for the poor, according to Williamson, are “the rational application of the principles of a hierarchically ordered society in which those in positions of privileged responsibility are not wicked de facto.…Social justice is an acknowledged responsibility downwards, so to speak, and Isaiah was doing no more than giving forceful expression to a widely acknowledged ideal” (Williamson 2012, 72). He thus concludes: “At no point, so far as I can see, is this structure itself critiqued; it is taken as a given and appropriate behavior within it is expected” (Williamson 2012, 77). I have proposed that Micah (at least) sees things differently and may well be calling for a significant change “at the top” (Smith-Christopher 2015, 165–171). Furthermore, Williamson does not think that many of the ideals of social justice were defended

by the prophets *by citing Mosaic laws* (which may or may not have existed in the form we have them now) but by evoking a generalized sense of fairness: the need for care and compassion for others is based on observation, suggesting a Wisdom-like "order of creation" ethic for social justice. Injustice is clearly a violation of the way life is supposed to be.

Williamson's conclusions are similar to but not entirely compatible with Moshe Weinfeld's earlier, classic work, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel*. The latter observes:

(p. 170)

> If we look at exactly what it was that the prophets opposed, we see that main wrongdoing is not the perversion of the judicial process, but oppression perpetrated by the rich landowners and the ruling circles, who control the socio-economic order.(Weinfeld 1995, 36)

Weinfeld notes that often *mishpat* is affiliated with terms like "mercy," "kindness," or "charity."

Gottwald's observations suggest an even stronger sense of the social criticism implied in at least some of the prophetic rhetoric:

> Since the prophets were generally facing institutions and functionaries who already held power within prevailing political and social systems, they had the disadvantage of opposing a hegemonic ideology that was solidly established as the official version of the truth about Israelite society. From the standpoint of the leaders they indicted, the prophets were labeled "troublemakers" (1 Kgs 17:17), "conspirators" (Amos 7:10), and "madmen" (Jer 29:26). Because of the intense social conflicts in which they participated the prophets were seen less as idle dreamers than as dangerous subversives. (Gottwald 2016, vol. 1, 70–71)

If this is the case, then even though Gottwald also admits that prophetic criticism may not necessarily imply a desire for an entirely different society, the social criticism is implicit in some of the voices in the Twelve:

> Within this restoration milieu, the balance in prophetic commentary and advocacy shifts from social criticism toward social construction based on a reformed cult.… This may mean that post-exilic prophets were moved to focus heavily on rallying support for the reconstituted cult as "the last best hope" for Israel, even as they criticized the corruption and social blindness of many cultic officials. (Gottwald 2016, vol. 1, 66)

I do not share many of the assumptions that propose to relegate prophetic critique to the past. The very fact that Amos and Micah *are* included in the Twelve suggests that it was impossible to dispense with their criticism. The presence of such powerful social criticism of the Hebrews themselves, like the Penitential Prayers, is surely a reminder that such mistakes can, and do, occur again. Furthermore, I am not convinced that scribes would

avoid reminding people of corruption and injustice for the sake of their own employment as well as the people’s morale in Persian-period Yehud. Finally, I am also not convinced that judgement against foreign peoples (even if it is called a kind of “justice” without the word “justice”) rules out continued awareness of internal corruption and injustice. If the Twelve is a complete work, then to read the Twelve as a whole means that Amos and Micah and others must continue to be heard no matter the period to which they are assigned, and their criticism (as indicated by Jeremiah) seems doggedly and persistently prone to resurrection. “Justice” may not be an obvious “unifying idea” of the Twelve, but attempts to homogenize these books can lock critical jus (p. 171) tice away in the past or collapse justice into nationalist judgement of foreign nations. We may need to live with an incompatibility of different prophetic voices in order to give each a unique voice.

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Violence in the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

Although the theme of violence assumes different nuances in the different voices within the Twelve (Minor Prophets), these texts reflect certain patterns in their response to violence. This article explores the prophetic response to violence in two social spheres. First, the texts speaking into pre-exilic Israelite and Judean societies respond to the internal violence within these societies by proclaiming divine violence utilizing foreign nations as judgment against these societies. Second, the texts speaking into the postexilic experience respond to the violence of foreign nations by proclaiming divine retributive violence against the nations. In both cases, God responds to violence with violence. Although this worldview would seem to produce an endless cycle of violence, some of these texts proclaim a possible path to peace and restoration beyond the violence, which is inextricably linked to the theme of violence.

Keywords: violence, Minor Prophets, the nations, retribution, judgment, restoration, peace

THE prevalent appearance of violent imagery, metaphors, and rhetoric in the Twelve poses no shortage of interpretive challenges for modern readers.[1] The theme of violence features in each of these prophetic texts in some way. Even Haggai, which largely lacks explicit images of violence, responds to the violence suffered by Jerusalem at the hands of foreign nations by envisioning a day in which YHWH will "shake" the nations, thereby bringing their wealth to Jerusalem (2:6–9) and overthrowing their power (2:20–23). While several texts in this collection admirably condemn societal violence, the use of retribution theology and the willingness to attribute violence to God raises troubling theological implications for modern readers (see discussion in O'Brien 2015, 119–125; Houston 2015, 33–42).

While the theme of violence assumes different nuances in the different texts of the Twelve, these prophetic voices reflect certain patterns in their response to violence. This collection as a whole presents a theological vision of the world in which God responds to violence with retributive violence. This worldview unfolds across the Twelve in two social spheres. First, the texts speaking into pre-exilic Israelite and Judean societies respond to

the internal violence within these societies by proclaiming divine violence as judgment against these societies. For these texts, defeat and exile at the hands of foreign nations serve as the ultimate expression of divinely commissioned judgment. Second, the texts speaking into the postexilic Jewish experience respond to the violence of foreign nations by proclaiming divine retributive violence against the nations. In both cases, God responds to violence with violence. While this worldview would seem to produce an endless cycle of violence, these prophetic texts proclaim a possible path to peace beyond the violence. This path to peace, however, remains inextricably linked to the theme of violence. The following essay, therefore, explores the prophetic response to violence in both social spheres within the Twelve prophets before examining the relationship between this violence and the proclaimed paths to peace. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the theological challenge posed by (p. 174) divine violence and how these interpretive difficulties can inform the way that exegetes speak to issues of violence in the modern world.

Preexilic Proclamations against Societal Violence

Six of the prophetic voices within the Twelve are commonly seen as speaking into the preexilic world (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah; on the pre-exilic portions of the Twelve, see Nogalski 2018). Of these six prophetic voices, five speak into the social conditions of pre-exilic Israel and Judah (excluding Nahum, which focuses on Nineveh). Each of these five prophetic voices within the collection condemns violence as one of several societal sins warranting divine judgment. As such, each of these prophetic voices incorporates violence into a larger framework of societal transgressions, thus contextualizing the theme of violence with different nuances.

Hosea betrays a notable concern for fidelity to YHWH and thus often frames societal violence as a form of betrayal against YHWH. Hosea 4:1–2, for example, names YHWH’s dispute with the “inhabitants of the land,” associating their lack of “truth,” “loyalty,” and “knowledge of God” with the presence of “swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery.” Several scholars note similarities between this list of societal sins and the prohibitions of the Decalogue, suggesting that this dispute reflects a broader concern for covenant fidelity (e.g., Schart 1998, 172; Rudnig-Zelt 2006, 128–129). Hosea 4:2 concludes with an emphasis on the societal violence with the vivid image of “bloodshed touches bloodshed.” A similar contrast between violence and theme of “loyalty” occurs in Hos 6:6–9. Even the condemnation of Jehu’s coup over the house of Omri in Hos 1:4–5 appears in the context of a wider familial metaphor emphasizing the theme of faithlessness to YHWH (cf. v. 2). Hosea frames societal violence as one of many manifestations of the lack of fidelity to YHWH among the people.

Whereas Hosea associates societal violence with a lack of fidelity to YHWH, Amos incorporates this violence into a larger condemnation of the exploitation of the defenseless (see discussion in Snyman 1995; Hagelia 2013). The Oracles against the Nations (1:3–2:16), for example, climax with a condemnation of Israel (2:6–16), who receives judgment

just like any other nation (cf. 6:2; 9:7). Whereas the oracles condemn other nations for violence against one another, Israel stands condemned for violence against the righteous, poor, and vulnerable of its own people (on themes of social justice in Amos, see Reimer 1992; Solano Rossi and Erdos 2014). For Amos, societal violence occurs as part of a larger problem of exploiting the defenseless within society.

Micah, similarly, links violence with the exploitation of the defenseless. The condemnations of Mic 2–3 target the Jerusalem elite. Micah 2 condemns those who unjustly seize land from the vulnerable. The text depicts these transgressors as stripping "the robe" from men returning from war and driving women from their houses (vv. 8–9). (p. 175) Micah 3 then more graphically depicts these "rulers of Jacob" using cannibalistic imagery, describing them as ripping the skin off of their victims and eating their flesh (vv. 1–4). The chapter leads to the declaration that they "built Zion by bloodshed and Jerusalem with injustice" (v. 10). As seen in Amos, by associating violence with the abuse of the defenseless, Micah nuances the manifestation of violence in society as part of a larger network of transgressions warranting divine judgment.

Habakkuk opens with a prophetic prayer to YHWH, asking how long before YHWH intervenes to stop the violence in Judean society (vv. 1–4). Unlike in the aforementioned prophetic texts, violence serves as the central societal transgression in Habakkuk. This opening prayer associates "violence" with the slackness of the "law" and the absence of "justice" in the land. For Habakkuk, YHWH must intervene in order to put an end to the societal violence.

Zephaniah includes "violence" among a list of duplicitous actions found in late pre-exilic Jerusalem. Zephaniah criticizes the people of Judah and Jerusalem for bowing down both to the stars and YHWH, as well as for swearing by both YHWH and Milcom (1:5; reading with the Old Greek). The text further pronounces judgment on those who "wear the clothes of foreigners," along with the officials and king's sons (1:8). Zephaniah 1:9 goes on to pair "violence" with "deception," condemning those who fill the "house of their LORDS" with both vices. Zephaniah 3:1–4 continues this theme of duplicity, accusing Jerusalem's prophets of being "treacherous" and her priests of "defiling that which is sacred." Zephaniah 3 concludes by framing these transgressions ultimately as "violence to the law" (v. 4). Within Zephaniah, violence comingles with deceit and duplicity against YHWH.

Divine Retribution against Pre-exilic Societal Violence

Although these five prophetic texts addressing pre-exilic Judean and Israelite societies nuance the theme of violence in different ways, they all provide a similar response to the presence of violence among the people of God. Each of these texts proclaims divine violence against Israelite or Judean society as a punishment for their transgressions. YHWH serves as the active agent that either commissions or directly carries out this violence. At

times, this judgment takes the form of YHWH withdrawing support and protection from the people (e.g., Mic 3:4). At other times, however, YHWH more actively proclaims violence on the people and their leaders (e.g., Hos 1:4–5; 7:16; Amos 2:13–16; 5:18–20; 7:9; Mic 3:12; Zeph 1:8–9, 12–18). Hosea 9:12–13 presents YHWH as bereaving his people of their children in punishment for their sins. Amos 8:3 depicts a particularly graphic scene of violence with corpses strewn about in every place. YHWH proclaims in Zeph 1:17, "And I will afflict the people so that they walk about like the blind, for they sinned against YHWH. Their blood will be poured out like the dust and their (p. 176) intestines like dung." Hosea even associates the prophetic word with divine violence against the people (6:5; cf. 9:8; 12:10–14).

These depictions of divine violence as retribution for societal sins often depict God with remarkably violent imagery. Hosea 5:8–15, for example, depicts YHWH as a lion, mauling Ephraim and Judah. After the violent attack, YHWH declares the intention to wait until "in their distress, they seek me" (v. 15). Amos 3:4–8, similarly, presents YHWH as a roaring lion and the prophets as warning the people of the coming danger. Hosea 13:8 employs similar imagery, depicting YHWH as a mother bear deprived of her young. "I will tear open the enclosure of their heart and I will devour them like a lion" (on lion imagery in the Twelve, see Zenger 2002).

In addition to the use of animal imagery to depict divine violence, Hosea employs a collection of descriptive and troubling family metaphors to represent divine judgment on the people (Hos 1–3, 11). Feminist interpreters have rightly directed scholarly attention to the dangerous implications of attributing domestic violence to YHWH (e.g., Setel 1985; Baumann 2000). Each of these chapters utilizes family imagery in slightly different ways. In the midst of these metaphors, Hos. 2 depicts YHWH's anger against the metaphorical wife for her perceived unfaithfulness. YHWH threatens to "strip her naked," "make her like the wilderness," and "kill her with thirst" (vv. 2–3 [Heb. 4–5]; cf. vv. 9–13 [Heb 11–15]). These violent threats serve to both punish the wife and force her back to YHWH (vv. 6–7 [Heb. 8–9]). In a quick transition that many redaction critics identify as evidence of later editorial developments within the text (e.g., Yee 1987, 127–130; Pfeiffer 1999, 202–208), vv. 16–23 [Heb. 18–25] reverse many of these threats by offering a restored marital relationship to the wife. This shift from divine violence to divine affection leads Brueggemann to suggest that the God of Hosea is "a God who is a *recovering agent of violence*" who both commits violence and impulsively promises to change (2008, 19, italics original).

While Hos 1:2 depicts the wife of YHWH as the land and Hos 3:1 suggests that the people best fill the role of YHWH's wife, scholars currently debate the identity of the wife in Hos 2 as well as the social and cultural antecedents that influenced this divine marital violence. Scholars have read this metaphor against the reconstructed background of Canaanite fertility cults (e.g., Katzoff 1986), ancient notions of covenant (e.g., Adler 1989; Abma 1999, 13–24), and ancient divorce customs (e.g., Gordis 1954). Some scholars see the threats of exposing the wife and making her "like a wilderness" as evidence that Hos 2–15 [Heb.2:4–17] speaks of the feminine personification of a city. Indeed, the gendered

personification of threatened and besieged cities occurs elsewhere in Micah and Nahum (see discussion in Gordon and Washington 1995; O'Brien 2015, lix–lxi). While contextualizing such imagery can explain possible contextual influences on this metaphor, Classens helpfully reminds readers that interpreters still have a responsibility to resist the propagation of such violence into the modern world through these texts (2016, 343–344).

Among this litany of divine violence against the Israelite and Judean societies, these pronouncements often present military defeat and exile as the ultimate experience of divine judgment (Hos 8:8–10, 13; 11:5–6; Amos 4:2–3; 6:7; 9:1–4; Mic 3:12; 6:16; Zeph 1:10–11, (p. 177) 16–17; Hab 1:5–11). Amos 5:3, for example, proclaims that the "city that sends out one thousand will only have one hundred remain, and the one that sends out one hundred will only have ten remaining." Micah 1:10–16 presents the destruction of the Shephelah villages (which many scholars associate with Sennacherib's campaign; see Corzilius 2016, 142–146) as resulting from Jerusalem's sins. Zephaniah 1:16 presents the Day of YHWH against Jerusalem as a day of the "trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities" (see similarly Hos 5:8; 8:1; Joel 2:1; 2:15; Amos 3:6; Zech 9:14). Throughout these prophetic texts that address the pre-exilic Israelite and Judean societies, destruction and exile at the hands of foreign nations become the ultimate expression of divine punishment.

Such a proclamation of exile as punishment thus necessarily frames other nations as the instruments of judgment in the hands of YHWH. Hosea 10:9–10, for example, directly equates the assembly of the nations against Israel for war with divine judgment (see similarly Amos 3:9–12 and Zeph 1:16–17). Hosea 13:16 graphically depicts Samaria bearing "her guilt" on account of her rebellion "against her God" with the words, "they will fall by the sword, their infants will be dashed, and their pregnant women ripped open." Amos 9:9 depicts YHWH as using the nations to "sift the house of Israel." In each of these instances, the violence that Israel and Judah endure at the hands of foreign nations ultimately comes from YHWH as a form of divine retribution.

The use of the nations to bring judgment against Israel and Judah raises a new problem for prophetic voices within the Twelve. Violence still remains a problem from the prophetic perspective, but now it comes from the nations and not Israelite or Judean society. The dialog of Hab 1 illustrates this problematic cycle of violence (see discussion in Verdini 2012). Habakkuk opens with the prophetic voice crying out to YHWH concerning the pervasive "destruction" and "violence" in society (1:1–4). YHWH responds by telling the prophet to look among the nations for "I am about to rouse the Chaldeans." The mighty Chaldean army thus becomes the instrument of divine judgment against the violence within Judean society (vv. 5–11). The prophet responds with a second complaint, now about the violence of the Chaldeans and their prideful self-exaltation (vv. 12–17). This second complaint leads to the proclamation of retributive violence against the Chaldeans (2:6–20). The prophetic depiction of YHWH as punishing societal violence using the violence of other human agents (the nations) thus sets up a divinely driven cycle of violence since YHWH will inevitably have to move against the violence of these agents next.

Postexilic Retribution against the Nations

The 586 BCE destruction of Jerusalem and subsequent Babylonian exile led to a significant development in the prophetic condemnation of violence. Whereas the prophetic voices speaking into pre-exilic Israelite and Judean societies announced the divine use (p. 178) of the nations to execute judgment against these societies, the prophetic voices speaking into the postexilic Jewish world in many ways respond to the violence that the Jewish people experienced at the hands of those nations. Ziony Zevit argues that biblical literature takes a violent turn following the exile when the Jewish scribes expressed their desire for vengeance and retribution against the nations. Zevit suggests that, being relatively powerless in the ancient world, they expressed their desire for vengeance through prophetic pronouncements and metaphorical images of God fighting their enemies rather than through actual military efforts (2007, 36–37). Just as the pre-exilic prophetic voices proclaim divine retribution against societal violence, the postexilic prophetic voices proclaim divine retribution against the violence of the nations.

Many prophetic passages in the Twelve present these pronouncements of violent retribution against the nations as a form of *lex talionis*. Habakkuk 2:8, for example, pronounces that just as Babylon plundered the nations, so shall the nations plunder Babylon. In Joel 3:4–7 [Heb. 4:4–7], YHWH promises to repay Tyre, Sidon, and the regions of Philistia for their deeds. Just as they sold the children of Judah into slavery, so will they be sold into slavery. Obadiah pronounces a poetic reversal of Edom's violence against Judah so that Edom ultimately receives violence (see discussion in Werse 2016). Many of these passages frame the divine violence against the nations as a just reversal of these nations' crimes.

In many of these passages, God serves as the active agent bringing violent retribution upon the nations. In Joel 3:1–3 [Heb. 4:1–3], YHWH gathers the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat in order to "enter into judgment with them there concerning my people" (see also v. 12). The second night vision of Zechariah depicts YHWH as using terror to strike the "horns" that scattered Judah (1:18–21). In the third night vision (2:1–13), YHWH raises a hand against the nations that plundered Judah. Zechariah 14 depicts a final battle in which God goes to battle against the nations and ultimately striking them with a plague. In each case, YHWH acts as the divine warrior doing battle on behalf of the Jewish people.

Whereas some passages present YHWH as enacting judgment against the nations, other pronouncements depict YHWH as strengthening Judah in order to carry out such retributive violence itself. YHWH strengthens Judah into warriors in Zech 10:3–7 (see similarly Zech 12:1–9). Part of the salvific announcement in Amos 9:11–15 envisions the restored ones as possessing the "remnant of Edom" and "all of the nations who are called by my name." Micah 4:9–13 envisions the nations as assembling to "defile" Zion, only to have her rise up and "thresh" her assailants, beating them into pieces. Micah 5:8 [Heb 5:7] depicts the exiles as a lion among a flock of sheep. This lion will rise up and tear the nations

to pieces with no one to deliver them. In each of these images, YHWH uses Judah against the nations just as the nations served as instruments of judgment against Judah.

Just as Hosea uses troubling gendered imagery to depict divine retributive violence against the Israelite people, so does Nahum use similar gendered imagery to depict divine retributive violence against Nineveh. Nahum 2 proclaims the siege and destruction of Nineveh for the city's wickedness among the nations. After the presentation of chariots in the streets (v. 4) and the opening of the gates (v. 6), the oracle articulates the (p. 179) exile of Nineveh (vv. 7–12). Nahum 3 then depicts this divinely orchestrated destruction and exile of Nineveh using graphic imagery. "Behold, I am against you…and I will lift up your skirt over your face, and I will cause the nations to see your nakedness and the nations to see your shame. I will throw filth upon you and I will treat you with contempt, and I will set you out to be seen'" (vv. 5–6; see discussion of this violent imagery in Gordon and Washington 1995; O'Brien 2002, 66–74; Gafney 2017, 45–59).

The nations thus become both the executioners of divine violence and the recipients of divine violence in the Twelve. On the one hand, YHWH commissions the violence that the nations bring upon the Israelite and Judean societies as part of divine judgment. On the other hand, YHWH then proclaims violent judgment against the nations for carrying out the violent actions that YHWH previously commissioned. Many texts in the Twelve never directly address the implications of this use and subsequent discarding of the nations. Joel 2, for example, presents YHWH at the head of the fierce army that threatens the people in vv. 1–11 but then quickly shifts to presenting YHWH as destroying the invaders in v. 20 without clearly addressing the change. Joel 2:18 only says that YHWH became "jealous for his land and had compassion on his people" (see similarly Hos 11:1–11).

Habakkuk suggests that the prideful self-exaltation and excessive violence of Babylon when carrying out the divine retribution against Judah made them worthy of divine judgment after they complete their commissioned task. Habakkuk 1:15–17 presents Babylon as mercilessly dragging in the nations like one drags in fish with a hook and net. Babylon then exults itself and sacrifices to its net for its great success. God responds to Habakkuk by promising to bring down the prideful and arrogant in 2:4–5, suggesting that YHWH commissioned Babylon to execute violent judgment on Judah but will then punish Babylon for their excessive violence and prideful self-exaltation (see similarly Isa 10:12–19; Jer 25:12–14; Zech 1:15).

Violence and the Path to Peace

Concomitant with these images of violence, the Twelve also depict remarkable scenes of peace. YHWH banishes war, for example, in Hos 2:18. Micah 5: 9–14 [Heb. 10–15] concludes with the divine pronouncement to cut off idols and implements of war, such as "horses" and "chariots" (see similarly Zech 9:10). Although this peace stands in opposition to the violent imagery in the Twelve, these proclamations of peace rarely exist independently of the theme of violence. In some cases, these images of peace function as reversals of the divine violence elsewhere, whereas in other cases the divine violence be-

comes a necessary prerequisite for attaining peace. Even the idealized images of the "pilgrimage of the nations" (Mic 4:1–5; Zeph 3:9–10; Hag 2:6–9, 20–23; Zech 14:16–19) reappropriate themes from Mesopotamian imperialism by conceptualizing Jerusalem as the dominant imperial power to which other nations must submit (see discussion in Ego 2016; Chan 2017).

(p. 180) Images of peace and restoration in the Twelve frequently involve some form of reversing previously proclaimed divine violence. The divine restoration of peace to the people in Joel 2:18–27, for example, reverses the divinely orchestrated threats of the drought, locusts, and army from earlier in the text. The vision of the restoration of peaceful existence in Amos 9:11–15 similarly involves reversing the destruction pronounced earlier in Amos 5:2, 11. The pilgrimage of the nations scene in Mic 4:1–5, which includes the nations beating their "swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks," repeats six keywords from the announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem in Mic 3:9–12 (see discussion in Kessler 1999, 179–180). Since judgment in these texts often involves some form of divine violence, the proclamations of restoration and peace often reverse divine violence. Just as YHWH causes violence as judgment, so can YHWH reverse violence in order to restore peace.

For many of these texts within the Twelve, the experience of divine violence as judgment should inspire the people to repent in order to attain the restoration of peace. Joel 1:1–2:17 observes the devastation of the land through drought, locusts, and military invasion. The text assumes that these threats serve as evidence that the people must return to YHWH. Amos 4:6–12 similarly depicts a series of agricultural and military disasters that should have served as an adequate warning for the people to repent. Zephaniah 3:6–7 even presents the violent destruction of other nations as a warning for Jerusalem and Judah to return to YHWH. For many of these texts, repentance serves as the way to survive judgment (e.g., Amos 5:4–6; Zeph 2:1–3) and to experience restoration after judgment (e.g., Hos 2: 16–23 [Heb. 2:18–25]; 6:1–3; 7:10; 10:11; 14:1–7 [Heb. 14:2–8]). Within this worldview, the experience of divine violence should thus inspire the people to repent and return to YHWH, which in turn leads to a restoration of peace.

Just as divine violence against the people of God can lead to their repentance and the restoration of peace, so can divine violence against the nations serve to restore peace to the people of God. Since the worldview of many of the postexilic prophets conceptualizes the nations as oppressive agents of violence, the restoration of peace necessitates the disempowerment and judgment of the nations. Joel 4:1–3, 9–15, for example, presents YHWH as gathering the nations in order to judge them for their violence against Israel. This violent judgment becomes the path for restoring hope and strength to the children of Israel, ultimately leading to the establishment of Judah and Jerusalem forever (vv. 16–20). Habakkuk 3:12–13 presents the destruction of the nations as part of the divine actions that save the exiles. In Zephaniah's Oracles against the Nations, the destruction of the seacoast and Moab allows for the remnant of Judah to possess these territories (2:6–9). Following these Oracles against the Nations, the text announces that God will use the na-

tions to carry the exiles back to Jerusalem (3:9–10), thereby leading to Jerusalem's ultimate restoration (3:14–20; see discussion in Werse 2018, 582–584).

Zechariah, in particular, presents the judgment of the nations as a necessary component for the restoration of Jerusalem. The first night vision (1:7–17) juxtaposes divine anger against the nations with the restoration of Jerusalem. The second half of Zechariah pronounces judgment on Judah's enemies as part of the divine return to Jerusalem (9:1–9, 13–17; 10:10–11). In each of these cases, the text presents YHWH as (p. 181) ultimately working toward the reestablishment of peace for the people of God by turning the divine retributive violence against the nations.

Interpreting Violence

The theme of violence in the Twelve thus undergoes a progression as part of a larger prophetic worldview. Within this worldview, YHWH responds to societal violence with violent retribution that eventually takes the form of foreign nations functioning as agents of judgment. This use of the nations as agents of judgment thus propagates more violence in the world, thereby prompting divine retribution against the nations. While this divine response appears to propagate a divinely driven cycle of violence, many later texts within the Twelve envision this cycle as eventually leading to the restoration of peace.

Some interpreters rightly praise and affirm the beginning and end of this thematic progression within the Twelve. Commentators lift up Amos and Micah, for example, as exemplary prophetic voices for social justice in society (e.g., Alfaro 1989, 1–2; Fretheim 2013, 189–192; Solano Rossi and Erdos 2014, 27–41). Furthermore, the visions of international peace found in passages such as Mic 4:1–5 and Zeph 3:9–10 serve as powerful contrasts to the persistent realities of violence experienced around the world. These declarations from within the Twelve rightly resonate with modern interpreters who seek to use these ancient prophetic pronouncements to speak into the modern world.

While such condemnations of social injustice and proclamations of an eventual peace may resonate with modern readers, the interpretive difficulty comes from the inseparable relationship that these themes have with divine violence. As Houston points out, Amos may condemn social injustice, but the text responds to these injustices by proclaiming divine violence against Israelite society as a whole in such a way that brings suffering upon the oppressed and oppressor alike (2015, 33–42). Even the visions of eschatological peace in which the nations make pilgrimage to Jerusalem reflect a literary reappropriation of Mesopotamian imperialism (Ego 2016; Chan 2017), which occasionally contains threats to enforce the nations' submission to this new world order (e.g., Zech 14:16–19). This image of peace thus depends upon divine violence for its construction and enforcement. The central role that divine violence plays in this prophetic worldview thus creates difficulties for interpreters seeking to affirm any aspect of this worldview.

Many developments in the study of the Hebrew prophets over the last several decades help modern readers understand the origins and functions of this violent rhetoric in its ancient contexts. Feminist biblical scholarship challenges the gendered assumptions of both the biblical text as well as many traditional interpretations of these prophetic metaphors (see discussion in O'Brien 2008, 29–48). Postcolonial hermeneutics help scholars explore the ways in which this violent rhetoric responds to the persistent threat of Mesopotamian imperial powers to the Israelite and Judean peoples (e.g., Perdue 2013). Studies on trauma and resilience help biblical interpreters see this literature as reflecting (p. 182) and responding to the traumatizing events of war and exile in the ancient world (e.g., Poser 2012; Carr 2012; Boase and Frechette 2016). Each of these approaches provides important insight into the historical and cultural contexts within which this violent rhetoric originated and functioned.

While such insights help modern readers contextualize this violent rhetoric, Claassens correctly points out that interpreters have a responsibility not only to explain the historical context of this imagery but also to resist the propagation of violence into the modern world by these texts (2016, 343–344). As Weems aptly warns, "Metaphors matter because they are sometimes our first lessons in prejudice, bigotry, stereotyping, and in marginalizing others—even if only in our minds" (1995, 107). Texts such as the Hebrew prophets that speak across generations exist as both reflections and shapers of ideology.

Interpreters employ a wide range of methodologies in their attempts to take seriously the implications of attributing violence to God within these texts. Some scholars attempt to read these violent images of God in conversation with nonviolent metaphors so as not to deny the reality of problematic metaphors but also not let them stand alone (e.g., Nielsen 2013, 214–215). Other scholars find the images of divine violence unsalvageable for modern interpreters and thus reject the violent depictions of God in their entirety (e.g., Gafney 2017, 64). Still, other interpreters, while recognizing the problem of divine violence, attempt to find aspects of meaning conveyed through these metaphors that modern readers can still affirm (e.g., Brueggemann 2008).

While these approaches contain significant differences, they are united by a shared desire to acknowledge the problematic divine violence in these prophetic texts as well as a shared desire to speak constructively and theologically into a modern world that continues to be plagued by violence. The troubling attribution of violence to the divine in these texts holds the power to unsettle modern readers. By attributing violence to YHWH, these texts portray violence in dialog with paradigms of power, justice, authority, and the wide range of metaphors used to conceptualize YHWH's engagement with this world (e.g., familial and marriage metaphors). The careful reader of the text thus must consider how violence intersects with this wide range of themes and metaphors. Readers of these texts, however, also encounter the complex intersection of these themes far beyond the text, as the world continues to suffer from violence that echoes through social systems of power, conceptions of justice, and families. Careful reflection on how these ancient prophetic voices addressed these issues in their world can inform the way that interpreters speak

on these issues in the modern world, whether they choose to read with or against the metaphors of the Hebrew prophets.

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Notes:

(1.) I am exceedingly grateful to Nathan Hays for his comments and questions that helped improve this chapter. The present chapter approaches these prophetic texts as works of literature. As such, the prophetic names refer to the texts and not the individual prophetic identity behind the texts. All translations are the work of the author.

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The Minor Prophets’ Relation to the Torah and Former Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay tracks references to Israel’s past in the Minor Prophets as one avenue into exploring their connections to the Torah and Former Prophets, while also observing ways in which shared or similar traditions shape prophetic rhetoric. Key themes emerge, such as God’s character, apostasy and idolatry, covenant and judgment, and critique of power and leadership. Specific remarks, particularly in the last of the Twelve, indicate complex and innovative processes of the reinterpretation of Torah and prophecy. These derive canonical meaning when the Book of the Twelve is read in relation to the Torah and Former Prophets as authoritative collections.

Keywords: apostasy, canonical, covenant, idolatry, Minor Prophets, Torah, Former Prophets, reinterpretation, prophetic rhetoric

(p. 187) TRACKING references to Israel’s past in the Minor Prophets is one avenue into exploring their connections to the Torah and Former Prophets, allowing readers to observe ways in which shared or similar traditions shape prophetic rhetoric. Similarities between these major sections of the biblical canon include key themes such as God’s character, apostasy and idolatry, covenant and judgment, and the critique of power and leadership. Specific remarks, particularly in the last of the Twelve, indicate complex and innovative processes of the reinterpretation of Torah and prophecy. These derive canonical meaning when the Book of the Twelve is read in relation to the Torah and Former Prophets as authoritative collections.

Dating Prophets in Relation to the Books of Kings

Six of the Minor Prophets are dated by their superscriptions, four of which mention monarchs in 2 Kings. Three of these superscriptions refer to the period when Assyria dominated Israel and was threatening Judah: Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:23–29) and Uzziah (Azariah, 2

Kgs 15:1–7) appear in Hos 1:1 and Amos 1:1; and Jotham (2 Kgs 15:32–38), Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:1–20), and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:1–20:21) appear in Hos 1:1 and Mic 1:1. Zephaniah is dated to the time of Josiah, after the fall of Israel, in the last phase of Assyrian power and just before the rise of Babylon (2 Kgs 22–23). The dates tie these (p. 188) books to the chronological scheme of 1–2 Kings, leading readers to interpret their content in the context of the imperial powers as known from Kings. Although not given superscriptions, Nahum and Jonah both concern Nineveh (albeit in completely different ways), and their placement within the Twelve facilitates the reading of those books within the context of Assyrian power. The mention of Jonah ben Amittai in 2 Kgs 14:25 connects Jonah explicitly to this time period; however, Kings does not provide any additional information. Not dated by a superscription, Habakkuk quotes divine speech to the effect that God will send the Chaldeans and their fierce armies to attack (Hab 1:6), implying that Babylon is the imperial adversary and power that God can muster against his people (Jer 21). Haggai and Zechariah, the latest of the books dated, place them in the Persian period. While the superscriptions provide a specific setting in which readers may locate the prophet's speech and actions, the books independently appeal to memories and invoke experiences from the ancestral traditions, the Exodus and wilderness traditions, the conquest and settling of the land, and events from the period of Israel's kings, as well as pointing to futures beyond the narrative present.

Jacob/Israel in Hosea (and Micah)

References to Jezreel (Hos 1:4, 5, 11; 2:24) and Jehu (1:4) tie Hosea's message to a time in Israel which 2 Kings portrays as relatively "good," between the period of the "bad" house of Omri and the unstable period following Jeroboam's successors that finally led to the fall of Israel (2 Kgs 15–17). Hosea associates Jehu and Jezreel with causes for punishment, a perspective that fits with Kings' overall negative view of Jehu in spite of the fact that he fulfilled the mission of Yahweh in purging the worship of Baal (2 Kgs 10:28–31; fulfilling 1 Kgs 19:17). The inclusion of Ahaz in Hosea's superscription subtly alludes to Assyria looming on the horizon; an ambiguous figure in the biblical tradition (2 Kgs 16:1–20), Ahaz may represent the alliance with Assyria that defeated Israel. Against this background, the accusations of apostasy in Hosea read with a heightened mood of urgency and a sense of unavoidable disaster. On the contrary, the mention of Hezekiah in Hosea's superscription signals more hopeful tones and prepares readers for the calls for return and reversal in the final chapters.

The main theme of Hosea 1–13 is the accusation of unfaithfulness and seemingly unavoidable punishment. In doing so, it refers liberally to the "story of Israel" familiar to readers of the Torah and Former Prophets. It indicts Israel with powerful metaphors of apostasy and unfaithfulness such as "whoring" and adultery in describing worship of Baal and idols (1:2; 2:4–19; 4:10–11; 7:4; 9:1–3; cf. Judg 2:17). Hosea's world is dominated by Assyria and the shadow of Egypt, and alliances with these nations (5:13; 7:11; 11:11; 12:2) become metaphors of infidelity toward a God who has been theirs since "the land of Egypt" and who rescued them from bondage (12:9, 14; 13:4–6; cf. Exod 1–15; see also Amos

2:10; 3:1; 9:7; Mic 6:4; 7:15; Hag 2:5; Zech 10:10–11). Transgressions of the covenant and forgetting the law are other accusations (Hos 4:6; 6:7; cf. Deut 6:1; Josh 22:5).

(p. 189) A number of these references to Israel's past function like key memories of transgression (Holt 1995). Examples include Baal-Peor (9:10; Num 25) and "the days of Gibeah" (9:9; 10:9), presumably referring to the gang rape of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 and the ensuing slaughter and atrocities in Judges 20–21. "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos 11:1) juxtaposes a familial relationship metaphor for the divine–human relationship with a reference to the Exodus, implying further associations, such as the idea that the time before Israel knew the law was a time of innocence and fidelity (cf. 13:4). The polemic against high places resonates with a prime motif of the book of Kings (Hos 10:8; 1 Kgs 13; 12:34; 2 Kgs 14:4, etc. See also Amos 4:17; 7:9; Mic 1:3, 4; 3:12; Hab 3:19).

References to the story of Jacob merge with the personification of Israel as Ephraim in Hos 12–13. Accusations against Ephraim, the House of Israel, and Judah (12:1) and the mention of Jacob in 12:3 lead to a short biographical recollection of the "ways of Jacob": grabbing his brother by the heel, striving with God/the angel, seeking favor, and Yahweh speaking at Bethel (Hos 12:3–4; Gen 25:24–26; 28:16–22; 32:22–32).

Hosea 12:12 [Heb. 12:13] recalls Jacob in Mesopotamia, tending sheep for a wife (Gen 29), paralleled with a reference to a prophet (Moses) guarding the Israelites. Hosea 13:4–6 picks up the allusion to Moses in 12:13, evoking the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings, where God knew (fed/nurtured) Israel, after which they became satisfied and forgot Yahweh (Exod 32:15). Hosea 13:11 presents a severely negative recollection of the monarchy, testifying to one of the contesting voices of the Former Prophets (1 Sam 8–10).

Like Hosea, Micah refers frequently to Jacob/the "House of Israel": 2:7, 12; 3:1, 8, 9 in judgment speech; and 4:2; 5:7, 8 in more hopeful utterances (cf. Amos 6:8; 8:7; Nah 2:2; Mal 1:2; 2:12; 3:6). The basic message of Micah is that the sin of Israel is ominous for Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 17 compared to 2 Kgs 24–25 and Ezek 16:46–52; 23). Micah ends with a message of mercy for Jacob and Abraham (7:20), appealing to God's promises.

Zion in Joel

Zion, with the promise of future restoration centered on Jerusalem, is a major image in Joel (2:1, 15, 23; 3:5; 4:16, 21). Although the name Zion is not prevalent in the Former Prophets (2 Sam 5:8 and 1 Kgs 8:1 refer to the "fortress of Zion") and never occurs in the Torah, the usage of "Zion" in Joel and other Minor Prophets relates to a cluster of events reported in the Former Prophets about the election of David and of Jerusalem, and the promise concerning the Davidic dynasty (e.g., 2 Sam 7). It also relates the idea of central sanctuary in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 12). In prophetic poetry Zion is associated with God's deliverance and visions of future restoration of Yahweh's people. In the Twelve, Zion acts in many ways as a meme for a whole complex of meanings and an overarching narrative set of events (Amos 1:2; Obad 17, 21; Mic 1:3; 3:10, 12; Zeph 3:14, 15). The

Zion figure refocuses events of the past—about the election of David, the city of Jerusalem, the building of the temple, and Yahweh's subsequent destruction (p. 190) and rejection of the king, city, and temple—onto the future promise of restoration, which at times points forward into an eschatological future for the whole earth (Biddle 2007, 157).

Expanding on a vision of a future gathering in Zion (Mic 4:1–13), Mic 5:2 (Heb. 5:1) speaks of a future king originating in Bethlehem, tying Zion traditions to this city from which David originated (1 Sam 16; 17:12, 15, 58; 20:6, 28) and potentially connecting them also to Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin (Gen 35:19; 49:7), and to Ruth/Naomi. In Zechariah, usage of the Zion figure features prominently in ways that mirror Joel's as the place of God's presence, election, and protection. References to Zion frame Zech 1–8: in 1:14 and 8:2 God is jealous for Zion; God will once again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem (1:17). Daughter Zion is encouraged to escape from daughter Babylon, and Yahweh will come to dwell in daughter Zion and once again choose Jerusalem (2:7, 11–12; 8:3; 9:9).

An offshoot of the Zion/David/election/temple theme of the Former Prophets is Haggai's mention of the signet ring of Zerubbabel (2:23). This connects Zerubbabel to the Davidic line (Jer 22:24; 2 Kings) and to the idea of a future election of David. Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12 also clusters to this idea, though only through the more mysterious reference to the branch or shoot (*zemah*; see also Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15). Also contributing to a messianic theme in the Minor Prophets is Zech 12:7–14, which mentions the "tents of Judah," "house of David" (13:1), and Hadad-rimon in the plain of Megiddo, perhaps recalling Naaman's king's house of worship in 2 Kgs 5:18 and Josiah's death in Chronicles. The references to the mourning for "the pierced one" mention the houses of Nathan, Levi, and Shimeites (and their wives), which may allude to Israel's past, though it is difficult to pinpoint exact referents.

Religious Malpractice in Amos

Following the initial oracles against Israel's neighbors, Amos accuses Judah of rejecting the Torah of Yahweh and not keeping his statutes (2:4), language reminiscent of Deuteronomy. Following several accusations against Israel, Amos appeals to God's past acts, including plagues of Egypt (4:10); Sodom and Gomorrah (4:11); and creation (4:13; 5:8). Amos's message is concentrated on condemning the religious practices of the shrines during the reign of Jeroboam II. The rhetoric of chapters 3–6 emphasizes religious malpractice (especially 5:21–25 and 6:4–6), and frequently mentions northern shrines Gilgal/Bethel (3:14: 4:4; 5:5, 6) and Samaria (3:9; 4:1).

The narrative report of Amos confronting the priest Amaziah (7:10–17) is similar to the archetypal narrative situation of a prophet confronting a king, numerous in the Former Prophets: Samuel confronts Saul (1 Sam 13, 15); Nathan confronts David (2 Sam 12); Elijah confronts Ahab (1 Kgs 18); and Micaiah confronts Ahab/Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22). Foundational for the episode in Amos is the utterance in 7:9, evoking the dynastic curses against the house of Jeroboam and the house of Ahab (1 Kgs 14:10; 16:11; 21:21; 2

(p. 191) Kgs 9:8) and giving Amaziah a basis for his allegation that Amos has "conspired" against the royal house of Israel. The interchange between Amos and Amaziah reflects ongoing negotiations over prophecy, discussed further later.

Fraternal Strife in Obadiah

Obadiah evokes the fraternal struggle between Jacob and Esau (Gen 25; 27; 35) to speak about the difficult and unresolved relationship between Israel and Edom (Amos 1:11; Mal 1:2) and, by extension, about divine retribution/revenge against the nations on behalf of Judah. While Edom bears the greatest guilt because Jacob and Esau were brothers, Edom becomes a representative figure as "the least of the nations." Obadiah goes farther than the Genesis traditions in accusing Esau of violence (Obad 10–14) and appears to construct memories of a collective experience of trauma attributed to Edomite aggression (Num 20:14–21; 2 Kgs 24:2; Joel 3:19; but Jer 40:11). Possession and dispossession are linked with the polarity of Jacob and Esau and Mount Zion and Mount Esau (17, 19, 21), where the fire of Jacob will consume the stubble of Esau.

Obadiah does not seem to allow for the tradition that God had given Seir to Esau and his descendants (Deut 2:4–5) and shares the harsh judgment on Edom found in other prophets (Jer 49:7–22; Ezek 35:5–15). Malachi reinforces this negative view with statements about God's hatred of Esau and destruction of Edom and with the characterization of Edom as "border of wickedness/evil" (Mal 1:2–4; Scoralick 2012; O'Brien 2008, 165–166).

God's Character Traits in Jonah and Micah

The Minor Prophets share with the Torah traditions in describing God as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." God himself announces these traits in Exod 34:6–7; 20:5–6; Moses quotes them back to God in Num 14:18; and Moses uses them to describe God to his audience in Deut 7:9–10 (Lasine 2016). Jonah, along with Joel and Micah, describe God as merciful (Joel 2:13–14; Mic 7:18–19), although Jonah 4:2 omits reference to God's punishing justice. Micah, whose name means "Who is like Yahweh?" asks, "Who is a God like you?" in describing God's mercy, compassion, and faithfulness (7:18–20).

In Mic 6:2–5, divine appeals to the people's past utilize the "story of Israel" as a rhetorical strategy for prophetic indictment, as if God is asking: "What have I done to you? Accuse me! Remember this, remember that." God brought Israel up out of Egypt and redeemed him from house of slavery/bondage; God sent Moses, Miriam, and (p. 192) Aaron (representing, perhaps, Torah, prophecy, and the cult). Micah also appeals to the acts of Balak and to Baalam's demonstration of who Yahweh is. The Balaam traditions in Mic 6:4 represent the positive memory of Balaam as one who was called by Balak to curse the Israelites but instead ended up blessing them (Num 22–24; Deut 23:4, 5; Josh 24:9, 10) rather than the negative view expressed elsewhere (Num 31:8, 16; Josh 13:22). While the

people fail to remember God's gracious acts, God cannot forget the wickedness of the people (6:10); they follow the laws, doings, and counsel of Omri and Ahab (6:16).

In addressing the corresponding question of how God's people should serve a God like Yahweh, Micah thematizes the topic of cultic worship: What does God desire, sacrifices or justice (6:8, 11)? Together with Hosea's (6:6) and Amos's cult polemics (5:21–25), Mic 6:8 exemplifies prophetic critique of the cult, although there is no consensus on the implications of this for how ancient Israelite prophets related to the cult (Barton 2007; Bibb 2004; Lafferty 2012). The Minor Prophets criticize Yahwistic cultic practices but also expect and assume that Yahweh is to be worshiped ritually. This agenda matches the sacrificial legislation of the Torah in which the accusation of apostasy is the "sin" of Baal Peor (Num 25). The "good" kings of 1–2 Kings clean up the cult, removing not just non-Yahwistic cultic objects and rituals but illicit Yahwistic cultic practices as well. Aniconism, monolatry, and correct cultic worship are central to the Torah and to the Former Prophets (e.g., 2 Kgs 23). These concerns are repeatedly voiced in the Twelve, such as in the charge of sacrificing to Baal (Hos 2:15; 4:17–19; 11:2; Zeph 1:4–6), the critique of festivals (Hos 9:1–6), polemic against places and practices (Hos 4:15; 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5), and regarding fasting (Zech 7:6).

God as Cosmic Warrior in Nahum and Habakkuk

As the capital of Assyria and Judah's main imperial enemy in 2 Kgs 15:29–19:37, Nineveh is the target of God's anger in Nahum. Nahum presents Yahweh as the one who controls the waters and makes the mountains shake (1:4–5). The theophanic description alludes to similar portraits of God as cosmic warrior (Exod 15; Deut 33; Judg 5; 2 Sam 22 (=Ps 18); Hab 3; Psalm 29). In the theophanic warrior poem of Hab 3, the toponyms Teman, Paran, and Midian connect to traditions recorded in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These descriptions entail fear and threat for the enemy and thus security and comfort (*naham*) for Israel (Nah 1:7–8; 2:1, 3).

The Minor Prophets present Yahweh as warrior also in war language used to threaten both other nations and his own people (e.g., Hab 3; Joel 2:1–11; Zech 9:14–16). The image is reinforced and complemented by presentations of Yahweh's role in Israelite warfare in the Pentateuch and in Joshua–Kings. 2 Kings 17 and 21–24 show what happens when God's terms are crossed: he takes out his might on his own people.

(p. 193) Universal Judgment as New Creation in Zephaniah

The terrifying opening of Zephaniah connects it firmly with the creation account of Gen 1 and the flood narrative of Gen 6–8. The devastating universal judgment entails the undoing of creation; all will perish: humans, animals, birds, and fish (1:2–6; 18). The curses of

Deuteronomy will be fulfilled (1:13; Deut 28:30). What is to be consumed is idolatry: those who worship Baal, the host of the heavens, and Milcom, as well as the idolatrous priests and those who do not seek Yahweh (Zeph 1:4–6). Many readers will connect these charges to Manasseh and his guilt (2 Kgs 21:3–6), which even Josiah's purification of the cult could not outweigh. It is as if God has to step in and do the job himself, and many read this text as proto-apocalyptic.

Allusions to the Past as Images of the Future in Zechariah

Zechariah 9–14 relies heavily on Jeremiah and Ezekiel, although a couple of allusions to Israel traditions from Genesis and the Former Prophets do appear, mostly in the form of leveling judgment against the nations and promises of restoration to Israel and Judah (Lee 2015). Allusion to the Joseph narrative in Zech 9:11, with liberation being promised from the pit (Gen 37), becomes an expression of salvation for Ephraim. Allusions to the Genesis theme of sibling rivalry and deceit in the Joseph story serve to emphasize Judah's role in the relationship between north and south (Zech 13:4–5; Boda 2017, 187–189, 193; Redditt, 2003).

Covenant, Apostasy, and Judgment

The Twelve clearly rely on the dynamics of God's judgment and concepts of covenant as expressed in the covenant curses of Num 26 and Deut 28, even when this is not explicit (Nogalski 2015). Charges of apostasy and the related charge of illicit worship may be the most pervasive topics of the Minor Prophets, and they are reflected in metaphors of whoredom, adultery, disobedient child, and others. Another pervasive figure portraying the consequences of apostasy is the infertility or the land (along with restoration as fertility) (Hos 2; 14:4–7; Joel 2:18–26; Amos 9:13–15; Mic 6:14–16; 7:1; Hag 1:10–11; 2:19). This complex theme also stands at the center of the Torah and the Former Prophets, connecting to, for example, 1 Kgs 18 and the continuous threats of (p. 194) expulsion and pollution of the land. Narrative traditions of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets that deal with apostasy, judgment, possible repentance, and God's merciful response are convoluted, with a complex presentation of the bumbling Israelites and their unrelenting apostasy. With this in mind, the Minor Prophets appear to communicate the accusations of apostasy and the announcement of God's judgment more categorically in black and white terms.

The Minor Prophets' attitudes toward the finality of judgment or the possibility of avoiding it vary: repentance remains an open option in Hos 14, while in Amos judgment seems inevitable and restoration may happen only after judgment has occurred for Israel. Micah and Zephaniah repeat this pattern for Judah. Various understandings of a future day of judgment are strongly present with the various uses of the "Day of Yahweh," a concept not found in the Torah or Former Prophets in particular in this supra-historical, eschato-

logical future form. This more universal judgment holds up the hope for a future restoration of at least a portion of Yahweh's people.

In the Latter Prophets, judgment on the nations includes the added justification that punishment is for their offenses against Israel. God's judgment on other nations (Joel 4:1–16; Amos 1–2:3; Obadiah; Nahum; Zeph 2:4–15) connects with the themes of "holy war," war against enemies, and the Divine Warrior as expressed throughout Deuteronomy and Joshua. The idea that Yahweh, Israel's God, would punish Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and smaller kingdoms like Aram, Gaza, Edom, and Moab, also corresponds thematically with ideas of divine justice and with the idea of Yahweh as God of all nations.

Critique and Reform of the Leadership

The Minor Prophets' criticism of leadership takes aim at the monarchy, the priesthood, and prophets. For example, Hosea and Amos are critical of monarchy and the priesthood (Hos 5:1–4; 6:4–6; 13:11; Amos 7:10–17). Amos brings allegations of anti-prophetic acts (2:11–12) and critiques a sense of entitlement (9:7–8). Zephaniah 3:4 critiques prophets and priests. Micah's questioning of prophetic activity and what true prophecy ought to be is explicit in 3:5–8, as is his critique of rulers and the justice system in 3:1–4, and the triad of elites: rulers, priests, and prophets in 3:11. Lamentations' triad of lament over "her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD" (2:9), and similar wording in Jer 2:8 echoes in the background. Criticism, accusation, and judgment are not the end point in the Twelve, however. Punitive destruction can take the form of a refining process and turn into reform and a vision of restoration, involving Zion and the kingship of God, a renewed covenantal understanding of Torah, and a "new" prophecy. In the remaining three sections, I discuss specifically the Twelve's material on kingship, Torah, and prophecy that these books share with the Torah and Former Prophets.

(p. 195) A Future Davidic Monarchy and the Kingship of Yahweh

Future restoration in the Twelve centers on Zion traditions, including the vision of a restored Davidic monarchy (Mic 5:2–5). A different scenario envisions a kingship of Yahweh, one closely tied to the theme of Yahweh as warrior (e.g., Joel 4:9–16; Obad 21; Mic 4:1–5; Zeph 3:8–20; Zech 8:1–9; 14:9, 16–17). These two contradictory views exist side by side, for example in Micah (Redditt 2007; Biddle 2007). The Minor Prophets incorporate the centrality of the Davidic promise, a tenet shared with the Former Prophets, and juxtapose it with a competing one that could potentially replace it, leaving options open for readers and interpreters.

Re-envisioning Torah, Temple, and Priesthood

The term *torah* is used in a number of ways within the Minor Prophets. In Hosea's indictment of Israel, Yahweh threatens with disaster because they "have forgotten the law of [their] God" (4:6) and "have transgressed [his] covenant and rebelled against [his] law" (8:2). Although God writes the whole of his law, they regard it as a strange thing (8:12). Amos accuses Judah, charging that they have rejected the *torah* of Yahweh (2:4). Speaking of a reversal of fortunes in which nations and exiles will turn and come to the mountain of God and to Zion, Micah explains that the nations are attracted because "the God of Jacob will teach his ways, for *torah* will come from Zion, the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem" (Mic 4:2). In Habakkuk's complaint about what he is seeing, he determines that justice does not prevail because *torah* is ineffective (Hab 1:4). Zephaniah accuses priests of violating the law, in a context of judgment on other leaders: officials, judges, and prophets (Zeph 3:3–4).

Although negotiated throughout the Twelve, the re-envisioning of *torah* and priesthood is seen most clearly in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The act of building the temple in Haggai becomes tantamount to piety toward God, connecting at some level with the temple-building narratives in Exod 25–40 and 1 Kgs 6–9, as well as Ezek 40–44 (Dempster 1997, 48). Referring to *torah* as a legal decision that Haggai is told by God to ask of the priests, Haggai then uses their answer to shape his prophetic message of the people's unclean state (Hag 2:11). The ruling is related to the project of properly consecrating the temple, which is a prerequisite for restoration. Here, a specific application of *torah* is highlighted: a way to overcome exile/pollution, the rededication of the temple, and the activity of inquiry contributes to shaping prophetic rhetoric. Zechariah's visions about the future in 1–8 make few references to the "story of Israel," but the dimensions of the (p. 196) flying scroll described in Zech 5:2 correspond to those of the vestibule of Solomon's temple in 1 Kgs 6:3. Moreover, the curses inscribed on the scroll speak of stealing and swearing falsely, evoking the Decalogue. With this allusion to the temple, Zechariah links the temple and the idea of a written, inscribed law. Further, Zech 7:12 refers to "the law and the words that the LORD of hosts sent by his spirit through the former prophets," providing an ideological presentation of the past. In Mal 2:4–9 *torah* refers to the instruction from priests as messengers of God (Deut 33:8–11; Exod 32:25–29; Redditt 2007,187). Priests should guard knowledge and seek *torah*, since the priest is a messenger of Yahweh Sabaoth. Malachi charges that the priests have turned from the way and have caused many to stumble by *torah*. The accusation that priests have corrupted the covenant of Levi follows the section criticizing the priests' handling of sacrifices.

Malachi refers to God's covenant with Levi (2:4–9), which became gradually corrupted. Although this exact phrase does not appear in the Torah, it finds close parallels in Deut 33:8–11 and Num 25:12–13 (Kessler 2012, 231). In a speech of restoration, the sons of Levi will once again sacrifice to God after having been purified (evoking the disasters of Num 10 and 16), and the sons of Jacob are promised rescue. Malachi envisions a new role for priests and a new ideal construct of *torah*.

Negotiating Prophecy and Revelation

Issues of prophetic authority and legitimacy are at stake in the Twelve, as in the Major Prophets (e.g., Jer 26–27; Ezek 13). On the one hand, the role of the prophet as a watchman is clear (Hos 9:8; Hab 2:1): God disciplines his people through them (Hos 6:5); speaks to prophets and brings destruction through them (Hos 12:11); raises up prophets (Amos 2:11); and reveals his secrets to them so that they cannot resist prophesying (Amos 3:7–8). On the other hand, prophets are called fools (Hos 9:7), opposed, and silenced (Amos 2:12). Amos claims that he is not a prophet (7:14), and Micah accuses prophets of corruption and causing people to err (3:5–7; 11). Zechariah proclaims that there will come a time when there will no longer be prophets (Zech 13:3–5; contrary to the vision of Joel 3:1). This theme of prophetic controversy and the idea that prophets may bring lies are reflected in both the Torah (Deut 13:1–5) and the Former Prophets (1 Kgs 22). In fact, Zechariah's critique of prophecy connects directly to Deut 13 and alludes to Elijah by mentioning a hairy mantle which is "deceiving" (Boda 2017, 184–187).

Habakkuk, Haggai, and Zechariah are referred to by the title "the prophet." As discussed earlier, Haggai presents the prophet as an interpreter of Torah, one who consults priests about the meaning of specific teachings in order to make his message clear (2:11–14). Zechariah 7 seems to define the role of prophecy as oral Torah. It describes a high-profile delegation being sent to the priests and the prophets with a specific question on fasting, and it introduces the answers to them as prophecies. The whole episode is framed as a dated prophecy, effectively shaping new prophecy as a report about a divine consultation on *torah*.

(p. 197) These prophets creatively read *with* and interactively complement both the Torah and the Former Prophets, offering alternative and supplementary concepts of law and prophecy. The reconceived triad of kingship, priesthood, and prophecy finds a counterpart in the rationale of Nehemiah's prayer (9:26, 32, 34, 37), which even specifies the time that it is concerned with as being "from the time of Assyria to now," the same time span as that covered by the Twelve. As such, the book of the Twelve responds to the Torah reactively but also makes its own positive contribution, eventually becoming itself part of an authoritative body of text.

The Book of the Twelve and the Canon

One way to view the Minor Prophets (and the Latter Prophets as a whole) is as body of divinatory signs for skilled interpretation (Biddle 2007, 155; Jones 1995, 15–16; Larkin, 1994), an understanding reflected early in the Qumran *pesharim*. Material within the Book of the Twelve lends itself to such an interpretation, such as the appearance of an angel in Zech 1–8 and Haggai's discourse on interpretation of Torah in Hag 2:1–12. Zechariah's reference to the "former prophets" (7:7, 12) and to "my words and my statues, which I commanded my servants the prophets" (1:4–6) reflects language likely drawn from Deuteronomy (and found also in, e.g., 1 Kgs 14:18; 2 Kgs 9:7; 17:13). Zechariah's in-

vocation of the prophets points to a view of prophecy as instruction for how to read scripture. Scholars have viewed these programmatic statements about the past role of prophets and God's "words and statutes" as particularly significant with regard to canonical considerations (Dempster 1997; Jones 1995 30, 236–237; O'Brien 2004, 215).

Recent attention to the scribal nature of biblical prophecy has provided a clearer view of ways in which biblical texts were produced, providing a social location for the processes through which books of the *Tanakh*, and the collections within in, respond to one another (Nihan 2013). Although the inter-referential nature of biblical books is easy to document, it is notoriously difficult to know the exact ways in which the Torah, the Former Prophets, and the Book of the Twelve have influenced one another. Each individual book has its own compositional and redaction history, the collections each have a complex diachronic history, and the processes of cross-referencing likely also drew on traditions since lost. The idea of Deuteronomistic redactions alone has produced countless reconstructions, many of them highly speculative.

This being said, there is wide agreement that sections of Habakkuk, Zechariah, and Malachi, in particular, respond to the Torah as an entity with authoritative status, and shape an ideological vision of Torah and prophecy for the future that reflect the late stages of development. As a part of the Prophets, the Book of the Twelve testifies to the importance accorded prophetic oracular collections and their discrete expressions of Israel's collective experiences and hopes. The Book of the Twelve (particularly in the last three books) exhibits perhaps more clearly than any other book within the Prophets the drive to relate prophecy to overarching concepts of Torah and revelation.

(p. 198) In Malachi 4:4–5 (Heb. 3:22–23), the Book of the Twelve ends with a combined invocation of both Torah and Prophets; Moses, described in Deuteronomy's language, and Elijah, prototype of ardent prophet of Yahweh, are both connected to Horeb. The reference to the "*torah* of Moses" (4:4 [Heb. 3:22]) complements the framing references to "the book of the Torah" found at other key junctions of the Prophets (Josh 1:8; 2 Kgs 22:8; 11; 23:25). This verse is an exhortation and a promise, combined with that uniquely Latter Prophets-concept of judgment on the "Day of Yahweh" (Nogalski 2003), articulating the eschatological dimension of this future vision.

Malachi 4:4–6 [Heb. 3:22–24], then, functions as an interpretative key for understanding the relationship between the Book of the Twelve and the Former Prophets and the Torah. As a collection, the Twelve's highly variegated material, with allegory and figurative language, visions, laments, judgment speeches, and more, serves as a compendium for future exegesis and interpretation. The range of views on key issues found within the Latter Prophets, even within individual books, supports the idea of an ongoing negotiation over prophecy. Among the signs of this process, Mal 3 seems deliberately to point to the Law and the Prophets in a way that leaves a method for future interpretation of Torah, Prophecy, and the collective experiences of Israel. The significance accorded Torah and Moses as prophet may indicate a conception of Moses and Torah as a "seal of the prophets" (Thelle

2013, 30–32). Reading the Book of the Twelve in a canonical perspective, prophecy is to interpret Torah.

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The Relationship of the Minor Prophets to the Major Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explores the relationship between the Minor Prophets and the Major Prophets. It covers three pathways that connect these two sections of the prophetic corpus. The historical pathway traces how the two sections reflect upon a selected set of historical issues and events. The textual pathway examines the exchanges that appear between the Major and Minor Prophets. In the third section, the thematic pathway, the essay provides a look at the way the two sections treat gender and ecology. The essay demonstrates that despite the perception of smallness, the Minor Prophets make significant contributions to the understanding and shape of prophetic literature.

Keywords: empire, crisis of prophecy, war and peace, gender, creation, ecology

(p. 201) THE grouping of the twelve prophetic books on a single scroll[1] has shaped the perception of the Book of the Twelve in relation to the other three prophetic books. As a combined work of several small units, they not only seem secondary to the larger books, but they can also appear as derivative. Much of the scholarly study of the Twelve has revolved around the construction of the single scroll and how the constituent books figure in this new creation. Christopher Seitz's comment that "the twelve-ness of the XII is crucial to its proper estimate as a collection" (Seitz 2018, 40) reflects the preoccupation of the scholarship. An exploration of the relationship between the twelve books and the other three provides an opportunity to affirm the integrity and value of this collection as a vital part of the prophetic corpus. These books share several features of the large three, but they also provide innovative insights on several issues. The opportunity to read the Twelve alongside the Three expands the range of prophetic discourse if only with agendas set by works that would normally be overlooked.

In this essay, I examine the relationship between the Major and Minor Prophets, a distinction that scholarship has sustained for several centuries. I begin by looking at the sociohistorical contexts that shaped prophetic literature in order to note how these collections coincide and diverge in their treatment of lived experiences. Secondly, I note a number of

literary overlaps between the three larger prophetic books and the collection of the Twelve. My examination here reveals dependence in both directions, given that some portions of the Twelve are as old as the three books. In the third section, I discuss two themes shared across the two sides of the collection: depiction of women and creation.

(p. 202) Historical Pathways

The prophetic literature spans the rise of the Assyrian imperial aggression in the eighth century to the Persian period. While both the Major and Minor Prophets stretch across this historical period, the twelve books reach somewhat further in their treatment of certain historical developments than do the larger three. James Nogalski notes more precisely the historical overlap between the two collections (Nogalski 2011a, 10). His treatment, however, does not recognize these historical differences between the Major and Minor Prophets. If one locates the final form of Isaiah in the fifth/fourth century BCE, then it falls within the early Persian period, more precisely "mid-5th to early-4th-century" (Sweeney 2016, 30). Similarly, Malachi could be located within that broad era or with greater historical precision, "a date between 450 and 400" BCE (Nogalski 2011b, 993). To the extent that redactional and other tools provide reliable historical data, then presumably some parts of the Twelve date almost a century later than the larger books. This extended historical reach means that parts of the Twelve cover later historical and sociocultural contexts than the larger books. In any event, the value of this difference lies in experiencing the depth of perspective on similar or related concerns rather than ascertaining hard historical data.

All prophetic literature deals with ancient empires in some way. In some instances such as Jeremiah, the Babylonian empire features in a central way. Haggai's date formula, to take another example, situates it in the middle of the Persian imperium. With the relative peace that results from Persian rule in the background affording a new era theologically interpreted as occasioned by divine will, Malachi offers the vision of a restored kingdom (Mal 1:5) and a divine king that controls the world (1:14).

Despite these direct and indirect references to historical empires, the disparities in the treatment of Assyria stand out across the prophetic corpus. Assyria is noticeably missing in a direct and extended way in most collections of the oracles against the nations, except for Zephaniah.[2] Ben Zvi guesses that historical knowledge explains the mention of Assyria in Zephaniah given Assyria's military proximity during the Josianic period, presumed to be the date of Zephaniah (Ben Zvi 1991, 299–300). Assyria though serves as the central concern of the presumably later books of Nahum and Jonah, despite the fact that these books are notoriously difficult to date. Jonah anticipates the destruction of the Assyrian capital Nineveh while Nahum seemingly witnesses that destruction. Nahum depicts Nineveh in grotesque terms that reflect other instances of "verbal, physical, and sexual violence" (Gafney 2017, 54). Jonah lacks these depictions but instead centers the prophet's outrage that Nineveh does not fall, even though such an event actually did take place in history. While it is possible that Isaiah may offer greater historical insight into

the earlier eighth century, the Twelve's later perhaps more literary treatments of Assyria are intriguing. The rising violent rhetoric, the gendered images, and the implicit invitation to ethical consideration create important spaces for conversation around the sociohistorical poles that can be situated between the two divides of the prophetic corpus.

(p. 203) The treatment of Assyria in Isaiah and Nahum offers a fruitful comparison. Outside of the oracles against the nations, the book of Isaiah contains an extended Assyria oracle in chapter 10. This oracle lacks the same level of invective against a foreign nation seen in Isaiah or other prophetic books. This oracle, normally dated to the eighth-century layer of the book, reflects an early treatment of Assyrian aggression. In this chapter, on one hand, Assyria is a divine instrument (10:5). On the other hand, Assyria's failings consist of arrogance (10:13–14) and overstepping its limits (10:15). The oracle takes the form of a woe introduced with the standard *hoy* (10:5) and evolves flatly with the simple statement of Assyria's fate without any descriptive images of the form of that punishment (10:12). By comparison, Nahum multiplies Isaiah's sparse vocabulary with a triple staccato of horrors: "devastation," "desolation," and "destruction" (2:10 [Heb. 2:11]). When Nahum introduces the woe oracle, Assyria is not addressed by name as in Isaiah (10:5). Instead, the Assyrian capital earns the negative designation "city of bloodshed" (Nah 3:1). The portrayal of Nineveh as a raped woman (3:5–7) introduces a series of other feminized images featuring devastation and loss (3:10–17).

The historical sweep between Isa 10 and Nahum may account for the level of affective engagement seen in Nahum. These intervening years between the two texts include various Assyrian military campaigns against Judah as well as the Assyrian destruction of Samaria. Whether Nahum singularly channels the Israelite and Judean animus against Assyria or draws upon contemporary anti-Assyrian sentiment remains uncertain. The quest to pin down exact historical considerations has the effect of controlling the ethical discussion around the rhetoric of violence in the book, as Julia O'Brien points out (O'Brien 2002, 18). Rather than providing exclusive insight into a historical period when Assyria "was not that bad" versus the time when Assyria becomes "the evil empire," Isaiah and Nahum present literary assessments of empire and the responses of conquered peoples to imperial power at various stages of dealing with those legacies. More than simply the differences between Assyrian imperial aggression in the eighth century versus the seventh century (presumably), Isaiah and Nahum create opportunities to analyze the sociohistorical worlds of the tradents of these texts and how they use imperial aggression rhetorically to confront their contemporary challenges.

The treatment of prophets and prophecy presents another striking area of difference between the two sections of the prophetic corpus, as seen in a comparison of Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Jonah. The book of Jeremiah explores some of the struggles around prophetic identity through the laments in the book. These passages apparently engage the sense of despair and struggle regarding the performance of the prophetic office. Largely decontextualized, these laments are not situated within narrative contexts that could offer insight into the interior experiences of the prophet. In fact, the speaker is not identified as Jeremiah. Laments do not follow the narratives of critical moments in the

prophet's life such as the face-off with Hananiah (chaps. 27 and 28) or his frustrating meetings with King Zedekiah (34:1–22; 37:17–21; 38:14–28). Despite the crisis in the life of the prophet, the prophetic task is performed and the book ends affirming the success of prophecy in Seriah's sinking of the scroll in the Euphrates predicting the downfall of (p. 204) Babylon (51:59–64). Of course, the book of Jeremiah confronts failure on the part on prophets that it accuses as feckless.[3] The book of Jeremiah expresses a loss of faith in prophets, particularly those who present a message that differs from Jeremiah's (23:13–14). A categorical disavowal of these prophets (23:16–32) follows their predicted doom (23:15). Despite this dire presentation, the book of Jeremiah situates itself as a successful witness of faithful prophecy. The reuse of material from 2 Kgs 25 in chapter 52 as well as the emphasis on the power of the scroll in chapter 36 and 51:59–64 enjoins the book as a witness surpassing the human prophets.

Zechariah expresses similar pessimism regarding prophets. Not only will prophets be ashamed of their craft, but also Zechariah anticipates that prophecy will cease (13:3–6). The comparison with idolatry discredits the prophetic office (13:2) to the extent that prophets will be erased from memory. Zechariah's denunciation echoes Amos's disavowal of membership in a prophetic guild (Amos 7:14). The inclination to diminish the despair expressed in Zechariah with the view that it "likely intends false prophets" (Nogalski 2011b, 962) can avoid the angst present in these works.[4] The skepticism about prophets and prophecy that can be traced back to Deut 18:9–22 and 1 Kgs 22 continues into the postexilic period. In fact, the same theme appears in Zephaniah's critique of prophets and priests (Zeph 3:3–4), indicating strong links with Ezek 22:23–31.[5]

The book of Jonah brings the crisis in prophecy into sharp relief through the actions and words of Jonah. That Jonah dares to avoid the divine commission unlike any other biblical prophet sets him aside as "a questionable prophet" (Kim 2007, 505). At the same time Jonah experiences a successful response to his preaching that would be the envy of other biblical prophets. This response stands counter to Jonah's own inclination and to the content of the message he is given. Jonah's contention lies in the fact that the divine word could not be trusted, given the reality of what Alan Cooper regards as "divine caprice." Cooper states that the book highlights the reality that "God's actions are uncanny and inexplicable; he is absolutely free to do as he chooses," freed from the constrains of a conditional covenant (Cooper 1993, 150).

The postexilic context marks a new environment in which questions of theodicy replace the earlier preaching of covenant obedience. Jonah follows in a tradition of earlier prophets such as Isaiah who questions divine timing (Isa 6:9–10) and Jeremiah who decries divine deception (Jer 20:7–9). Unlike Isaiah (21:6–12) and Ezekiel (3:16–21; 33:1–9), Habakkuk deploys the image of the prophet as sentinel not to watch the people but to ascertain whether the divine word is true (1:17; 2:1). Jonah's presentation of the prophet–divine relationship as contentious rises to another level because, as Ben Zvi indicates, in the postexilic period prophecy is no longer about prediction but turning the minds of contemporary listeners (Ben Zvi 1996, 127). Jonah moves beyond the ethical issues raised by other prophetic texts about the sincerity of prophets and engages a prophet's doubts

about the reliability of the divine word. In this light, Anthony Abela characterizes the book of Jonah as “a prophetic writing involved in metalinguistic discourse on prophecy itself” (Abela 2001, 2).

(p. 205) Textual Pathways

Several areas of textual exchange appear between the Major and Minor Prophets. Those who suggest that the structure of the Twelve intentionally imitates the structure of the Three offer theories that range from intentional copying to unintentional mirroring. Working with a broad conception of intertextuality, Nogalski identifies features linking the two corpora such as allusions, catchwords, motifs, and framing devices (Nogalski 1996, 103). Nogalski not only believes that the Twelve reflect patterns seen in the Major Prophets but also argues that those who framed the constituent parts and the Twelve as a whole knew and were influenced by the three larger books (Nogalski 1993, 280). His notion that the books are ordered into a single collection on the basis of catchwords such as the chronological superscriptions (Nogalski 1996, 119) serves as one aspect of the foundation for Grace Ko’s identification of the collection’s U-shape. Like the other three prophetic books, the Twelve follows the plot of a downward spiral that ends in upward hopes and oracles of restoration. Ko positions Habakkuk “at the lowest point of the U; the nadir of the narrative schema” (Ko 2013, 326). Alternatively, Louis Stulman and Hyun Chul Paul Kim regard the collection of twelve books as “too sporadic or random to show evidence of authorial or textual intention” (Stulman and Kim 2010, 185). Nonetheless, they detect resemblances of an extended oracle against the nations that stretches from Obadiah to Zephaniah, occupying a central place in the collection (Stulman and Kim 2010, 203), much as the oracles against the nations take a somewhat middle point in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the LXX of Jeremiah.

The textual connections between the Twelve and the Three vary. There are instances of the reuse of material to frame the Twelve in relation to the Three, such as the reuse of the Judean king list from Isa 1:1 in Hos 1:1. There are also direct quotations, such as the quotation of Jer 49:9, 14–16 in Obad 1–5. Nogalski thinks that the quotations are not “precise duplicates” since Obadiah modifies the Jeremiah text in light of Amos 9:1–15 (Nogalski 1996, 104). The reworking of motifs also occurs; for example, the similarities between Isaiah and Zephaniah suggests to John Ahn that Zephaniah may have been one of the disciples mentioned in Isa 8:16. Ahn notes how Zephaniah reuses the image of the “stretched out hand” with its menacing properties (Zeph 2:13 cf. Isa 5:25; 23:11) (Ahn 2009, 294). The shared use of idiomatic expressions also occurs as in Zephaniah’s use of the term “remnant of Judah” (2:7), which is similar to Jer 40:14; 42:15; 44:12, 14, 28. Ben Zvi points out that Jeremiah developed this peculiar term for the Gedaliah community after “its collapse and subsequent exile” (Ben Zvi 1991, 159–160). This term contrasts with the expression “remnant of Israel,” which is used more frequently in Jeremiah.

The prophetic books also reflect the shared use of renewed and emerging theological symbols such as the Garden of Eden. References to the garden occur in Joel 2:3, Ezek

36:35, and Isa 51:3. In all of these instances, the garden stands as “a metaphor of undisturbed fertility of the land” (Nogalski 2011a, 232). The shared use of the garden metaphor becomes notable for the absence of references to sin and lost innocence. Joel, though, (p. 206) extends the garden image to point to the possible inversion of fertile land into wilderness. The citation of Micah as a prophet in Jeremiah (26:16–19) suggests Micah as a historical figure, the priority of the Micah text over Jeremiah, and the circulation of texts among the small Jerusalem community. The reference also, as Daniel Smith-Christopher points out, suggests that the two prophets share the same message. Smith-Christopher is cheered by the view that both Jeremiah and Micah take similar anti-war positions regarding Babylon (Smith-Christopher 2015, 27).

One of the more striking shared uses of text occurs in Isaiah, Micah, and Joel. Both Isaiah and Micah make use of the so-called peace poem (Isa 2:1–4; cf. Mic 4:1–5), though Micah contains additional verses (vv. 4–5) and a different conception of the nations’ relationship with Jerusalem. While Isaiah envisions the global pilgrimage as the universal worship of the deity of Jerusalem, Micah understands that each nation will continue in its adherence to its respective deity. The predominance of Isaiah among biblical and more specifically prophetic writings supports the assumption that Micah draws upon Isaiah and expands the source with the additional verses. This assumption has the value of hearing Micah in relation to Isaiah as a sharp rebuke of Isaiah’s nativist and imperialist aspirations. The addition of Mic 4:4–5 goes beyond Isaiah’s narrow vision of coopting the technologies of oppression for another, albeit nobler, purpose. Smith-Christopher calls attention to the need to read both passages in their literary context. This means acknowledging that Isa 2 follows the discussion in Isa 1 of punishment for failure to secure a just society. Tull indicates how Isa 2 reverses the specter of war “with foreigners devouring the land” from the previous chapter (Tull 2010, 81). In Isaiah, the vision of peace privileges Jerusalem. Micah, however, engages the superficial comforts of “peace” pedaled by the prophets (3:5) and the jaundiced view of justice held by the rulers of the city (3:9–12); it presents the difficult demands of peace that require stability and well-being among all people. Whether or not the poem is original to Micah, the words soar in that literary context, particularly when contrasted with Isaiah.

The words of this poem become even more curious when they are inverted in Joel: “Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears” (3:10 [Heb. 4:10]). The instruction is made more immediate through the use of imperative verbs directed to the assembled warriors. The verbal transformation does not offer confirmation that Joel challenges the tendency in modern times to “exaggerating the future tense” in Micah and/or Isaiah so as to render the vision “unrealistic” (Smith-Christopher 2015, 130). Instead, the imperatives in Joel may indicate that ancient communities embraced disarmament as a real possibility and a viable plan. Despite what seems a call to war, Joel offers little more than the assembling of troops to wait in divine judgment (3:11–12). Whether or not warfare becomes the preferred method of addressing the abuses of the past (Nogalski 2011a, 247), Joel situates the necessity of accounting for wrongs as a crucial component of peace.

Textual connections reveal both similarities and differences in the Prophets. The evidences of sameness with adjustments made for differing historical and social contexts can confirm the view that prophetic texts draw from a restricted reservoir. Despite the diversity of names of prophets and the historical breadth, prophetic literature develops (p. 207) in a defined period in a constricted environment. Ben Zvi describes the context of textual development that yields the links described here as a "small literate group of scribes in Persian-era Yehud means the prophetic…books were shaped in their present form, read and reread within a tight-knit, cohesive social group. We also can assume they arose with a shared social discourse" (Ben Zvi 2009, 17).

Thematic Pathways

The historical range of the prophetic books notwithstanding, the community of ancient Israel confronted a series of challenges throughout its history. Different generations and presumably different literary traditions offer their unique take upon those issues. Whether these reflections take place in direct conversation with previous generations remains unclear, given the limitations of the methods available in biblical studies. Indeed, present-day scholarship cannot shake the tendency to create the past in its own image. Therefore, in this section I discuss two themes that occur across the two sections of the prophetic corpus without engaging presumptions of borrowing or dependence. The value of this discussion lies in exploring the depth of prophetic literature rather than encompassing its presumed breadth (which may not be as broad as we imagine).

The exclusively male prophets presented as "authors" of prophetic books indicate a decidedly masculinist outlook for these books. Not only are women negatively conceived in sexualized terms as bearers of sin, but also they are subject to acts of horrific violence in what O'Brien regards as "a variation on the theme of violence against women that runs throughout the prophetic corpus" (O'Brien 2002, 87). While some books call upon the ancient practice of feminizing cities as the preferred metaphor for the divine–human relationship, some use named or fictionalized women. Hosea and Ezekiel portray various aspects of the sexual violence against women in the Bible. Apart from these features, they share the preference to narrativize and name women, presenting more visceral depictions of the fate of women under a normalized misogyny. By looking at Hosea and Ezekiel, I treat one book from each side of the dividing line of the Latter Prophets.

These two books scale their portrayals of gender violence differently. Hosea treats the story of the prophet's marriage to Gomer in three chapters (chaps. 1–3),[6] while Ezekiel narrates the story of the sisters Oholah and Oholibah in one chapter (chap. 23).[7] In relation to the size of the book, Hosea's story should rise to greater prominence, especially since it appears at the start of the book, and yet the story of Gomer is as (un)familiar to most readers as Ezekiel's narrative, which takes up a small part of its respective book. My point is that the size of the book makes little difference for the reception of the stories of gender violence in the prophets. When these stories in Hosea and Ezekiel *are* encountered, they are rarely engaged as stories of abuse and violence.

Geography operates on a different scale in each story. Hosea provides no geographical reference, suggesting that his wife's sexual adventures are concentrated locally. (p. 208) Ezekiel, however, describes Egypt as the initial geographical setting where the sisters begin to sexually act out, as well as the location where they were sexually molested (Ezek 23:3). The early explanation that the sisters represent the cities of Samaria and Jerusalem (v. 4) feels more like an aside than an indication to readers to expect an analogical tale, as the story proceeds with great realism. The description of the sisters' sexual exploits with Assyrians and Egyptians depicts these encounters in vivid detail. For instance, Ezekiel offers images of the Assyrians' physicality (23:6), the Egyptian's sexual prowess (23:20), and the consumption of pornographic art featuring Babylonians (23:14–16). Ezekiel maps the geographical range of the sisters on to a broad range of sexual perversion. The internationalized geography here not only scales the sisters' obscenities but places their origins as foreign. According to v. 3, the sisters began their sexual activity at the time they were of marriageable age, using the terms *beṯulehen* ("virginity") and *binurehen* ("their adolescence"). Whether this suggests that they lacked a male guardian or they rejected the control of a male guardian is not clear. The story draws more attention to the valiant male who rescues these girls from a perceived life of debauchery and his misfortunes when they do not abandon their perversions. The geographic scope of sexual activity multiplies the level of sexual activity and therefore the man's shame.

Hosea's wife's limited geography implies a more restricted sexual palette; at least the lurid details of his wife's sexual activities are left out. As a text, Hosea is more fascinated by punishment. The bulk of chapter 2 details the punishments for Hosea's wife that consist of exposing her naked body; killing her by thirst; mistreatment of her children; denial of her freedom of movement; removal of her pleasures such as food, wine, and fine clothes; and an end to her participation in festivals (2:3–13). The details of the punishment in Hosea parallel the attention given in Ezekiel to the sisters' activity. Frustrating Hosea's wife's access to lovers is mixed with the punishments in a way that ensures not simply the denial of her pleasures but also the creation of a persistent punishment loop that denies a satisfying climax. Rhiannon Graybill's application of the notion of counter-pleasure from Karmen MacKendrick to Jeremiah's oracle against Edom has resonances with Hosea (Graybill 2015, 141–143). The narrative returns to its starting point in 3:1 with the divine instruction given in 1:2, setting up the expectation of a repetition of the sequence of events. Like Ezekiel, Hosea implies the impossibility of women given to sexual pleasure to restrain themselves and remain within the strictures set up for them by men.[8] Both stories communicate the view that women as sexual subjects will constantly be under the disciplinary regimes of the patriarchal society. In which case the books make a case for the maintenance of these systems.

The depiction of women under the fuzzy rubric of the Hebrew term *zonah*[9] sets them as fitting objects of violence. The term is a standard expression in the Hebrew Bible "to describe female characters and their sexual actions" (Graybill 2016, 53). The vagueness of the term notwithstanding, its use triggers the series of punishments used by Hosea and also introduces the conception from horror films of what Graybill offers as the "openness" of the woman's body. Graybill pays attention to the availability of women's bodies as rep-

resentative of geographic spaces (land, cities, fields) and as a site for prophetic messages (Graybill 2016, 51).

(p. 209) Such availability ultimately makes women's bodies open for violence of the sort that is seen in both Ezekiel and Hosea. Hosea's punishment of his wife involves deprivation of pleasures and essentials for life. Ezekiel, on the other hand, initiates a set of actions for personal voyeuristic consumption. The details of these sexual encounters read as an eyewitness account, suggesting the male protagonist's affective involvement in the sisters' sexual activity. By enabling the sisters unfettered access to their lovers (23:9–10, 22–31), the male protagonist also actively engages in the performances of cuckoldry but not as the shamed man. The assembly of the sisters' paramours resembles the seventeenth-century English Horn Fair,[10] a public gathering of cuckolded husbands along with their wives and the wives' lovers. This gathering served not only as a space for "publicly sanctioned debauchery" (Corcoran 2012, 551) but also as opportunity for Christian exhortation to virtue where preachers sought to shame women who claimed control of their sexuality. Ezekiel and Hosea openly admit to being cuckolded, but they turn their failures into sympathy and justification of violence. Since they go further than the ordinary man in marrying these particularly "broken women," they are entitled to an outsized application of violence. Whether written in a small book or large one, violence against women in the prophets has enormous implications.

In their development in the postexilic period, prophetic books come to terms with the precarity of existence in ways closely tied to the stability of the earth. This process can be seen in the way that Second Isaiah and Zephaniah develop the theme of creation. Second Isaiah restates creation theology and, in the process, produces creation as a source of hope and security. The motifs and language of Second Isaiah evoke those of the Genesis accounts of creation. The creator spreads out the heavens like coverings (Isa 40:22) in the way the dome demarcates the waters to create the sky (Gen 1:6–8). The shared use of the word *bara* ("create") connects Second Isaiah with Genesis. In a time of recovery from existential crises, Second Isaiah uses creation as a motif to affirm the incomparable nature of the Judean deity. Recalling the primeval origins serves to legitimize the deity's power to achieve what is seen as the incomparable feat of the defeat of the Babylonians through the agency of King Cyrus of Persia and the return of deportees to Jerusalem (Isa 40:25–26). This layered argument positions creation as an instrument within a theopolitical confrontation: supremacy over other deities and kings is a bigger concern than framing an ecotheology celebrating creation. Therefore, Second Isaiah speaks of the elevation of Cyrus (Isa 41:2) by the one who holds the origins of everything (Isa 41:4). The creation language of "fashion" (*yatsar*; cf. Gen 2:7) and "create" (*bara*, Gen 1:1) illuminates the objects of creation, in this case light and darkness (Isa 45:7) as much as the polemic against other theopolitical systems (Isa 45:5–6).

Zephaniah 1:2–6 also makes use of motifs and language from Genesis but uses that language to point to the destruction of creation. More attuned to the environment than Second Isaiah, Zephaniah pictures the systematic uncreating of the earth. Though not a precise mirror of Genesis 1, the narrative unravels the creation from the last to the first, be-

ginning with the elimination of humans and animals, followed by the birds of the air, then the fish of the sea (v. 3). The passage also mirrors aspects of the flood story. Sweeney connects Zeph 1:2 with Gen 7:4 and 8:8, accounting for the similarities through the (p. 210) shared postexilic priestly traditions and a redaction aimed to "universalize and eschatologize" the earlier words of Zephaniah (Sweeney 2003, 63). In any event, portions of the Twelve reflect sensitivity to ecological disasters beyond the forensic language of judgment seen in the larger books. Joel calls attention to the apocalyptic implications of the heaven, earth, and celestial bodies that press beyond their correlates in Isaiah.[11]

The examination of thematic differences and other differences among the prophetic corpus may not reveal significant gaps between the Twelve and the other prophetic books. Equally, the continuities in themes should not come as a surprise. The shared outlook, similar literary frameworks, and overlaps of words and language, as well as emergent insights, make a case for the Twelve to be taken seriously and read on equal footing as the Three. Exploring the relationship between the dividing line between Major and Minor Prophets shows the Twelve to be a viable partner in the relationship. Uncovering the wealth of insight that these books hold in their current form along with their value in the traditions enables allows us to value books for the power of their message rather than their size.

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Notes:

(1.) This may date as early as 150 BCE (Ben Zvi 1996, 130) or even the start of the third century BCE (Koorevaar 2018, 119).

(2.) Assyria appears as targeted for destruction in Isa 14:25 in a brief mention when compared to the extended oracles in Isa 10 or oracles for other empires. Zephaniah 2 includes Assyria, but the reference to Assyria (2:13) seems more in passing than a direct engagement.

(3.) Ezekiel inveighs against various categories of leaders, among them prophets (22:23–31), similar to invectives in Jeremiah 2:26; 5:31; 6:13; 14:18; 23:11–12.

(4.) Although the Old Greek of Jeremiah uses the term *pseudoprophetai* to refer to prophets other than Jeremiah, this happens only in the narrative relating to Hananiah and his company's opposition to Jeremiah (chaps. 26–28 [chaps. 33–35 LXX]). The other cases of sharp critique of prophets do not feature such name calling.

(5.) Sweeney indicates that Ezekiel draws upon and expands on the words of Zephaniah. Ezekiel makes the same comparison of the prophets with roaring lions (Sweeney 2003, 162).

(6.) For the purposes of this essay, I treat them as one woman, even though I acknowledge the possibility that there could be more than one woman featured in chapters 1–3. Gomer is only named as Hosea's wife in chapter 1. The usual assumption is that the woman in chapter 2 is the mother of his children, even though the names of the children (2:1) reflect more affection that those named in 1:6, 8. The woman he is instructed to marry in 3:1 need not be the woman he divorced in chapter 2.

(7.) Ezekiel has another extended narrative that depicts gender violence in chapter 16.

(8.) The attempt to improve the women in Hosea and Ezekiel masks their misogyny and resembles similar misogyny in the scenario described by rap artist E-40 in "Captain Save a Ho" (1993), where he pours scorn upon men who engage in what he considers the futile attempt to rescue women from sex work.

(9.) Both Ezekiel and Hosea use various cognates of *zonah* to describe the women in their narratives. Ezekiel repeatedly accuses the sisters of “sexually acting out” (23:3, 5, 19, 27, 30, 44). Hosea describes Gomer as “a woman of sexually acting out” (1:2).

(10.) Corcoran admits that the details of Horn Fair are murky, but it seems to have included public humiliation of unfaithful wives, who seem unrepentant, and the presentation of sermons.

(11.) Tull points to the following examples: Isa 13:6, cf. Joel 1:11, 13; Isa 13:10, cf. Joel 2:10; 3:15; and Isa 13:13, cf. Joel 2:10. So, too, the theme of harvest in Isa 24:13 is reused in Joel 3:13 (Tull 2010, 267, 305).

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The Relation of the Minor Prophets to the Wisdom Tradition(s)

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This essay analyzes the commonalities between the Minor Prophets and biblical Wisdom Tradition(s). After briefly addressing whether Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth constitute a unified "Wisdom Literature" whose writers are distinct from the authors of other bodies of First Testament literature, this essay outlines three methodological criteria for identifying influence from one corpus to the other. Rather than examine every (often isolated) point of contact between the two groups of books, the essay discusses clusters of wisdom elements in Hosea, Jonah, and Habakkuk that point to wisdom influence in each, as well as some prophetic elements in Proverbs and Job. Each book has adapted material from the other body of literature to its own purposes.

Keywords: Minor Prophets, Hosea, Jonah, Habakkuk, wisdom, Proverbs, Job, methodology, Qoheleth, Ecclesiastes

THE Minor Prophets and Israel's wisdom books are usually considered distinct bodies of literature. Since those responsible for each corpus operated within a shared Israelite society, however, we should find some overlap between them. In the following, I evaluate the literary evidence that individual books have adapted material from the other body of literature to their own purposes. This is primarily a matter of wisdom influence in Hosea, Jonah, and Habakkuk, but Proverbs and Job do reflect some prophetic elements.

Methodological Issues

Is There a Wisdom Tradition?

Israelite wisdom literature is traditionally defined as the books of Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth, plus the deuterocanonical books of Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon. Recently, however, some scholars have challenged the existence of an Israelite wisdom tradition in two ways. The first is by questioning whether these books constitute a coherent body of literature (Kynes 2019). These books were only linked in the mid-eighteenth century

CE, and Kynes claims that they do not represent a single literary approach. Job is clearly different from Proverbs and Qoheleth, and while the latter two have similarities, Qoheleth is critical of many views espoused in Proverbs.

(p. 214) Despite these concerns, the existence of an Israelite wisdom tradition does not require uniformity. Egyptian wisdom literature contains two strains: a conservative one that preserves established wisdom and a skeptical strain that calls that traditional wisdom into question, just like Proverbs and Qoheleth (and Job). The biblical prophetic books also demonstrate great diversity. The book of Isaiah is a composite work containing very divergent styles and emphases in First, Second, and Third Isaiah, yet all three parts are considered prophecy. Similarly, most but not all prophetic books display a concern for justice, but some prophets contain divergent views about the value of the cult (cf. Amos 4:4–5; 5:4–6, 21–25; Isa 66:1–3 with Hag 1:7–11; 2:18–19; Zech 8:9–13). Some prophetic books reinterpret earlier ones (e.g., Jer 25:11–12; 29:10; and Dan 9:24–27), while others contradict their predecessors. Micah 3:12 and Jer 7:1–14 reject Isaiah's Zion tradition that Yahweh will always protect the Temple, while Isa 2:4//Mic 4:3 are reversed in Joel 3:10 (cf. Ezek 37:15–22 and Zech 11:14). All these books nonetheless are considered an expression of Israel's prophetic traditions. Similarly, despite their differences, Job, Proverbs, and Qoheleth are united in their shared reflection on human experience while avoiding appeals to Israel's specific religious traditions. In fact, the reviews of Israel's history in the later books of Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon reinforce the distinctiveness of Job, Proverbs, and Qoheleth within the First Testament. Just as there is more than one prophetic perspective, so too the wisdom books contain different points of view, such that it is better to speak of Israelite wisdom traditions rather than a single one.

On the other hand, Mark Sneed has questioned whether the different types of biblical literature derive from authors working in isolation from each other (Sneed 2011). He argues that Israelite scribes were trained in all types of literary forms and so it is inappropriate to suggest that any of them only composed one type of literature. Sneed does acknowledge that when writing "wisdom" a scribe used the forms, vocabulary, and themes that are characteristic of wisdom and did the same for history, laws, and prophecy, and typically kept the different kinds of material separate. The prophetic pronouncement formulas "Thus says Yahweh" and "an oracle of Yahweh" never appear in the wisdom books, while the x/x + 1 formula listing items up to the higher number occurs only in Proverbs, Job, and Ben Sira (Amos 1:1–2:5 only identifies one transgression for each nation). The infrequent overlap among types of literature reinforces their separation, and Sneed's proposal makes a distinction that does not undermine the existence of Israel's wisdom traditions. Whether the characteristic aspects of the wisdom books (and other types of literature) derive from scribes who only wrote one type of literature or writers who composed many types of literature but usually kept them distinct, the result is the same: wisdom literature was mostly distinct from the prophetic, historical, legal, and cultic literature. It thus remains significant when these traditions overlap, and this essay focuses on overlap between the wisdom traditions and the Minor Prophets. This is primarily a matter of wis-

dom influence on the prophets, although there are some instances of the reverse direction.

(p. 215) Criteria for Determining Wisdom Influence

It is important to have clear criteria for establishing the relationship between the wisdom traditions and the Minor Prophets (see also McLaughlin, 2018, 141–170; McLaughlin 2021). The first criterion is the presence of common elements, namely shared vocabulary, forms, or themes/motifs that are characteristic of one group of writings but also found to a lesser extent in the other group, which may indicate that the latter has been influenced by the former. Some elements, of course, may be characteristic of both as in the case of questions and exhortations, which are basic components of oral and written communication and thus are characteristic of both wisdom and the Minor Prophets. Similarly, retribution theory, the idea that one's life should be positive or negative as a direct consequence of one's actions, is common to Israel's wisdom, prophetic, and legal traditions, while concern for social justice is found in the wisdom literature and many Minor Prophets. Clearly, while common individual elements might indicate influence from wisdom to the Minor Prophets or, vice versa, they might also simply be indicative of a shared context. Shared elements alone do not demonstrate influence, but if a term, form, or motif appears almost exclusively in one body of literature, it is more likely that limited instances in another group of writings are the result of direct influence from the former to the latter.

Because an author can imitate a characteristic element from another genre without reflecting that genre's actual use of that element, an additional criterion is needed. A second component of establishing influence from wisdom to the Minor Prophets or the reverse is to determine whether or not a characteristic element from the source corpus is used in the same way as in the target corpus. One must be attentive to wisdom terms used with a different nuance in prophetic books or a prophetic concept employed differently in a wisdom book.

The similarity of single items in a wisdom or prophetic text, even when they reflect the concrete usage of the other type of literature, could simply be a coincidence. A third criterion, then, for demonstrating influence in either direction is identifying multiple instances of elements from a source corpus in a target corpus. The relationship between individual Wisdom or Minor Prophet books can run the gamut from independent use of common sources, through parallel elements common to both, to conscious use of one by the other, depending on the extent to which distinctive elements from one are combined in the other.

From Wisdom to the Minor Prophets

The relationship between Israel's wisdom traditions and the Minor Prophets is primarily a matter of influence from wisdom books to the Minor Prophets. While some have proposed a wisdom editing of the entire Book of the Twelve (e.g., Van Leeuwen 1993; (p. 216)

Leuchter 2017, 241–247), not every one of the Minor Prophets reflects wisdom influence, and not every proposal is correct. For instance, the book of Amos is a clear example where scholars have incorrectly claimed wisdom influence (McLaughlin 2014). Nor is it possible to evaluate every individual point of possible contact. Instead, the following focuses on three Minor Prophets that demonstrate a relatively higher degree of dependence on the wisdom traditions.

Hosea

Most scholars take Hos 14:9 as an addition that interprets the whole book in terms of wisdom. Choon-Leong Seow is an exception, arguing instead that the verse is the prophet's summary of his "foolish people" theme reflected in Hos 4:7; 4:10b–12a, 14; 7:11a; 8:7; 9:7; 12:2; 13:3, which extends the wisdom contrast between the "two ways" (the "upright" and "transgressors" in Hos 14:9) throughout much of the book (Seow 1982). Seow's argument is reinforced by numerous passages using wisdom's reflection on human and natural affairs, starting with the analogy between his own marriage and Israel's relationship with Yahweh and supplemented by proverbs and comparisons in Hos 4:11, 16; 5:12; 6:4; 7:4, 11, 16; 8:7, 9; 9:10; 10:7; 13:3, as well as an echo of the opening to the Instructions in Prov 1–7 in the call to hear in Hos 5:1. The terms *hakam* ("wise," 13:13; 14:9) and *bin* ("understand," 4:14; 14:9) are characteristic of Israel's wisdom traditions, and the latter is followed in 4:14 by *labat* ("thrust away"), which otherwise occurs only in Prov 10:8, 10; "knowledge" and "to know" are less characteristic of wisdom, but in light of the other wisdom elements they too might reflect wisdom influence in Hosea. Finally, Hosea contains wisdom motifs like linking the created order with human affairs in conjunction with Proverbs' act-consequence theme (Hos 2:22–23; 4:3), a negative view of wine (Hos 4:11; Prov 20:1; 23:29–35), moving landmarks (Hos 5:10; Prov 22:28; 23:10), and the "proper time" (Hos 13:13 [together with *hakam*]; Eccl 3:1–8). While these diverse wisdom elements have not been integrated to make the book of Hosea itself a wisdom text, they do indicate didactic use of Israel's wisdom traditions in service to Hosea's prophetic message.

Jonah

The book of Jonah also has a number of points of contact with Israel's wisdom traditions (Trible 1963, 249–257). Instead of addressing a specific historical situation like other prophetic books, Jonah has an international and didactic perspective with no clear reference to Israel's specific history or religious thought. The book expresses reservations about traditional retribution theodicy and does so not through revelation but by reflection on nature, correlating human affairs with the transitory existence of a bush (4:10–11). Characteristic wisdom motifs include the fear of the LORD (Jon 1:9, 16), God's control of nature (1:4, 15, 17; 2:10; 4:6–8), and the rejection of evil (1:2, 3:8, 10; 4:6) and anger (4:1–4, 9). More specifically, Jonah displays literary and thematic affinities with the book (p. 217) of Job (Dell 1996, 96–100), and Jonah's protest in 4:2b cites the first part of Exod 34:6–7, which itself contains eight words or phrases that occur largely in wisdom books (Dentan 1963). As with Hosea, this constellation of wisdom contacts points to a clear rela-

tionship with the wisdom traditions, but the book's inclusion in the Minor Prophets is consistent with Jonah's characterization as a prophet carrying out a divine commission. As a result, the various wisdom aspects of the book of Jonah have been adapted to its overall prophetic nature, with the international context of the wisdom material reinforcing the book's universalist message.

Habakkuk

The third Minor Prophet with significant wisdom contacts is Habakkuk (Gowan 1968). Chapters 1 and 2 are a dialogue concerning theodicy that like Job is bracketed by a complaint and a storm theophany, but they do not refer to Israel, Judah, or Jerusalem, or to such characteristic prophetic motifs as election and covenant. The book questions the contrasting fates of the "righteous" (*tsedek*) and the "wicked" (*rasha*), a common wisdom word pair (two-thirds of the total occurrences of the words together). A number of other terms in the Habakkuk dialogue are otherwise linked only in wisdom texts: (1) *ra* ("evil") and *amal* ("wrongdoing") in Hab 1:13 and Eccl 4:8; (2) *rib* ("strife") and *madon* ("contention") in Hab 1:3 and Prov 15:18; 17:14; 26:20–21; (3) *hamas* ("violence") in Hab 1:2, 3, 9; 2:8, 17 and *boged* ("treacherous") in Hab 1:13; 2:5 only appear together in Prov 13:2; (4) Sheol and the root *saba* ("be sated, have enough") are only linked in Hab 2:5 and Prov 27:20; 30:16; and (5) the words *yafakh* ("witness"), *kazab* ("lie"), and *aman* ("speak truth") appear together in Hab 2:3–4 as well as Prov 6:19; 12:17; 14:5, 25; 19:5, 9. Emending *od* in Hab 2:3 to *ed* ("witness") would match its presence in all six Proverbs texts, yielding a total of four terms from the latter clustered together in Habakkuk. Finally, more distinctively wisdom vocabulary in Habakkuk includes *tokahat* ("argument"; NRSV "complaint"; Hab 2:1), plus *mashal* ("proverb"; NRSV "taunt") and *melitsah hidot* ("mocking riddle") in Hab 2:6. A number of these wisdom elements are clustered in Hab 2:1–5, suggesting that they have been intentionally combined from diverse wisdom texts, with additional wisdom contacts elsewhere in Habakkuk.

From the (Minor) Prophets to Wisdom

Prophetic elements are less common in the wisdom books, although there is possible influence from the prophetic tradition in Proverbs and Job. Some of these elements derive from the prophetic traditions in general, while others can be linked more directly to the Minor Prophets. Since these points of contact have been less extensively evaluated than possible wisdom influence on the Minor Prophets, the following gives greater attention to weighing the evidence for such points of contact.

(p. 218) Proverbs

The clearest case of prophetic influence in the book of Proverbs is Lady Wisdom's self-presentation in Prov 1:20–33, where she takes on the role and general form of address of a prophet (see also Dell 2006, 164–166). She calls out to passersby in public locations, just as prophets frequently sought out crowds in order to deliver their message. She posi-

tions herself at the city gates, which would have been a noisy setting for a school, although it was one place Jeremiah preached (Jer 17:19; 19:2) and a place of concern in Amos and Zechariah (Amos 5:10, 12, 15; Zech 8:16). Her tone of address and some of its content reflects the prophetic role. She "reproves" them (Prov 1:23, 25, 30), attacks their refusal to listen and respond to her challenge (Prov 1:24–25, 29–30), threatens them with punishment as a consequence (Prov 1:26–27, 31–32), and asks "how long" they will persist in their negative ways (Prov 1:22; cf. Jer 4:14; 13:27; 23:26; 31:22; Hos 8:5; Hab 2:6).

Even more than these reflections of a prophet, the passage's terminology reflects the wisdom traditions: the "simple" and "fools" (*petayim*, *kesilim*, vv. 22, 32) who "hate knowledge" (*sana daat*, v. 29, similar to 1:22); the "scoffers" (*letsim*, v. 22); "counsel" (*atsah*, vv. 25, 30); and the characteristic phrase "fear of the LORD" (*yireh yhwh*, v. 29; cf. 1:7, 2:5, 8:13, 9:10, etc.). Moreover, in contrast to a prophet, Lady Wisdom does not call for repentance but rather their attention, and her laughter at their fate when they do not listen to her (v. 25) suggests that she has a role in causing it, unlike prophets, who are the messengers of God rather than agents (but contrast Isa 6:8–10). Finally, the goal of her message is to have the listeners come to her, not Yahweh. Thus, Lady Wisdom does act like street-preaching prophet in Prov 1:20–33, but she preaches about herself, not Yahweh.

Another proposed area of prophetic influence in Proverbs is the adulterous woman in Prov 2:16–19; 5:1–23; 6:20–35; 7:1–27 (O'Dowd 2018, 178–181). The metaphor of Israel as Yahweh's wife, which is the basis for treating the nation's idolatry as adultery, is part of the prophetic repertoire. Perhaps the most famous examples are Yahweh's violent degradation of his adulterous wife in Ezekiel 16 and 23, but the motif also appears in Jer 2:2–3, 20–25, 33–36; 3:1–25 and elsewhere. Most importantly for this discussion, the metaphor originates with Hosea 1–3, where the prophet draws an analogy in chapters 1 and 3 between his wife's infidelity and Israel's worship of Baal, surrounding the description of the wife being shamed as she is stripped naked before her lovers in Hos 2.

The only common factor between the adulterous women in Proverbs and Hosea, however, is their adultery; otherwise they are formally and thematically distinct. In terms of form, Hos 1–3 (and other prophetic passages) is an allegory in which the adulterous woman is Yahweh's wife, whereas the adulterous woman in Proverbs is simply that; she does not represent anything other than herself. With respect to function, Yahweh's wife in Hosea (and elsewhere) has actually committed adultery, and the focus is on her being punished for having *given in to the temptation* to commit adultery with other men. In contrast, the adulterous woman in Prov 1–7 is *a source of temptation* who *might* lead young men astray, but the focus is on warning the reader and not the adulterous act as in the prophets. The exception is the example story in Prov 7:6–23, which does (p. 219) describe a young man succumbing to the temptation, but that is in service of the larger context, namely another warning to avoid such temptation. Even in this sole instance in Proverbs of the deed being consummated, the woman is not punished. In fact, at no point do the Proverbs texts say anything about punishing the woman; instead, they describe the consequences for the male, namely death.

In sum, the prophets focus on Yahweh's metaphorical wife succumbing to temptation with her foreign lovers and being punished for it. The adulterous woman in Prov 1–7 is markedly different in terms of form (real vs. allegorical), function (temptress vs. sinner), and fate (not stated vs. degraded). Apart from the fact that both are adulterous, the women in Proverbs and Hosea (and Ezekiel and Jeremiah) have as much in common with each other as they do with the women of the Pentateuchal adultery laws or the subject of local gossip.

A third point to consider is the meaning of *massa* in Prov 30:1 and 31:1. The RSV, NJPS, and NABRE understand this term as the geographical home of Agur and Lemuel, although this requires a slight emendation in the first instance. Massa (and Tema) is one of Ishmael's sons in Gen 25:14 and 1 Chr 1:30, and in his Annals, Tiglath-Pilesar III refers to "the inhabitants of Mas'a, of Tema" (ANET, 283) in NW Arabia. The wisdom of a foreigner would be consistent with the recognition of international wisdom in the First Testament (e.g., Gen 41:8; Exod 7:11; 1 Kgs 4:30; Jer 49:7; Obad 8; Dan 2:12; etc.) in general, and the use of the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope* in Prov 22:17–24:22 in particular; note also the non-Israelite origins of Job (Uz; Job 1:1) and his three "friends" ("Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite"; Job 2:11). To the contrary, *massa* frequently designates a prophetic form in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and it is used in this sense in Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Zech 9:1; 12:1; and Mal 1:1. In keeping with this meaning, the KJV and NRSV, among other translations, render the word here as "oracle." Since there is no consensus on the matter among Proverbs commentators, who variously support both translations for *massa* in Prov 30:1 and 31:1, the word's meaning must be determined from the content of the respective chapters. Since neither chapter contains a subsequent superscription, each introductory verse governs the entire chapter even though each is actually a compilation.

In support of translating *massa* as "oracle," Prov 30:1 identifies Agur's speech as "the utterance of the man" (*nehum gibbor*), a phrase that otherwise is only used of Balaam (Num 24:3, 15) and David (2 Sam 23:1). Balaam is obviously a prophet, and in 2 Sam 23:2–3 David attributes his words to divine inspiration. Otherwise there is little in Proverbs 30 to support Agur's speech as prophetic. Verses 7–33 can easily be excluded from consideration: the content reflects wisdom concerns elsewhere in the book while the x/x + 1 ("three…four") sayings in vv. 15–16, 18–19, 21–23, 24–28, 29–31 are characteristic wisdom forms (see also Job 5:19–22; Prov 6:16–19; Sir 25:7–11; 26:5–6, 28–29; 50:25–26).

This leaves only vv. 1b–6 as possible indicators of prophetic elements, but those verses are better linked to the wisdom traditions than attributed to a prophetic background. Agur never claims to speak in God's name, as would a prophet, however, and rather than speaking *for* God, Agur speaks *to* God about his weariness (1:b, NABRE, NRSV; in (p. 220) contrast, in RSV and NJPS he addresses individuals named Ithiel and Ucal), followed by his ironic denial (for a wisdom book) that he lacks wisdom (vv. 2–3). Verse 3b refers to "the holy ones," which most render as the singular "Holy One"; neither translation requires a non-wisdom context, but in either case Agur is also denying knowledge of the supernatural realm. Similarly, v. 4 asks a series of questions that initially suggest divine ac-

tions, but the implied negative answer to each continues Agur's efforts to distance himself from wisdom. On its own, the opening question suggests a prophet's presence at the Divine Council in order to bring down its message (Jer 23:18, 22), but the subsequent questions clarify that they all reflect a wisdom background. Both their form and content parallel Yahweh questioning Job about various aspects of nature in Job 38–39, which exemplifies the wisdom form of a "Challenge to a Rival" (see further later). At the same time, the opening question echoes the inaccessibility of wisdom in Job 28, a motif developed at length through comparable questions in Bar 3:14–30 (note especially the wording of v. 29).

This leaves Prov 30:5–6 as a possible prophetic reference, but "Every word of God" (v. 5) does not refer to prophetic revelation. Instead, the rest of verse is a near-verbatim citation of Ps 18:30//2 Sam 22:31, except that Prov 30:5 uses "God" rather than "Yahweh" in the opening words, in keeping with wisdom's tendency not to invoke specifically Israelite religious traditions. The following phrase, "Do not add to his words" in v. 6, draws on Deut 4:2, where Moses exhorts the Israelites not to add to the commandments, which are linked to wisdom in Deut 4:6.

In Prov 31, there is nothing to suggest a prophetic context either, and therefore no reason to render *massa* in 31:1 as "oracle" as found in the NRSV ("An oracle that [King Lemuel's] mother taught him"). A better translation is "The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, the instruction his mother taught him" (NABRE; cf. NJPS). Clearly, the term refers to what is being taught to Lemuel rather than to rebuke him as the prophets often did; elsewhere in Proverbs the verb *yasar* is used of wisdom instruction and discipline (Prov 9:7; 19:18; 22:6; 29:17, 19; the related noun *musar* occurs thirty times in Proverbs). This is consistent with vv. 2–9, which reflect the Egyptian instruction form replicated in Prov 1–7 and duplicate standard wisdom teachings found elsewhere in the book: warnings about women (vv. 2–3; cf. 2:16–19; 5:1–23; 6:20–35; 7:1–27), advice about alcohol (vv. 4–7; cf. 20:1; 21:17; 20–21, 29–35), and concern for the impoverished (vv. 8–9; cf. 14:21; 17:5; 19:17; 21:13; 22:16, 22; 28:3; 30:14; 31:20).

Moreover, while the acrostic poem in vv. 10–31 is the conclusion to the entire book of Proverbs, it is not formally separated from vv. 1–9. For our purposes, it is important to note that it has significant links to the figure of Lady Wisdom. The opening question, "A noble wife who can find?" echoes the exhortations to "find" (*matsa*) Wisdom in Prov 3:13; 8:17, 35, and the consequence of finding her in 8:35 is the same as finding a wife in Prov 18:22 ("receives favor from the LORD"). In addition, the woman is deemed "more precious than jewels" (31:10), as is Lady Wisdom in 3:15 and with similar wording in 8:11 ("wisdom is better than jewels"). Thus, as with 30:1, the content of the chapter reflects the wisdom traditions, not the prophetic ones, which militates against rendering *massa* here as "oracle."

(p. 221) Job

The book of Job also contains some possible prophetic elements, both in terms of a specific parallel with Zechariah as well as the general understanding of prophetic revelation that the Minor Prophets share with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Here too, however, not every proposed point of contact between the wisdom books and the prophetic literature withstands scrutiny.

The opening narrative in the book of Job describes the "sons of God" meeting with Yahweh to discuss Job (1:6–12; 2:16), depicting the divine council that is found in biblical and extra-biblical texts. In the Bible it occurs primarily in prophetic texts, such as 1 Kgs 22:19–23, Isa 6, and Zech 3 (but cf. Ps 82). The divine council underlies the prophets' self-presentation as God's spokesmen and their use of messenger formulas such as "thus says Yahweh" and "utterance of Yahweh." In fact Jer 23:18, 22 make participation in the divine council a necessary criterion for true prophecy. Since the divine council is not found in any other wisdom texts, Job 1–2 must have derived it from elsewhere, most likely the prophetic tradition.

At the same time, the figure of the *satan* in Job 1–2 establishes an explicit parallel with the divine council in Zech 3. The presence of the definite article in both instances requires that the word refers to a role or occupation, namely the "accuser" or "adversary" rather than the much later Satan as the name of the devil. Although the use of the article reinforces the similarity between the two passages, the *satan*'s role is not identical in Job and Zechariah. In Job he not only raises questions about Job's fidelity and piety (Job 1:9–11; 2:4–5) but also is commissioned by Yahweh to afflict Job (1:12; 2:6–7). The *satan*'s role as the council's agent is directly paralleled by the actions of the lying spirit in 1 Kgs 22:21–22 and of Isaiah in Isa 6:8–10. In contrast, in Zech 3:1–2 the *satan* is rebuked by Yahweh before he can carry out his intention to "accuse" the high priest Joshua, thereby preventing him from fulfilling even the primary adversarial function of his office found in Job 1–2.

These differences suggest that the two passages developed separately rather than through one directly influencing the other. We might expect a characteristically prophetic motif like the divine council in a wisdom book to be the result of influence from one or more prophetic texts, but Job 1–2 is closer to other prophetic texts than is Zech 3. Job 1–2 reflects the primary purpose of the divine council, with heavenly beings discussing human affairs and one of them serving as the council's agent, not just announcing the decision about Job but actually putting it into effect. In contrast, in Zechariah 3 the discussion is cut short; there is no council decision to be either announced or carried out, but rather Yahweh announces an independent plan concerning Joshua. It is unlikely that the author of the Job narrative expanded on Zech 3 in such a way as to correspond more to texts like 1 Kgs 22 and Isa 6, but that does not mean that the limitation of the *satan*'s role in Zech 3:1–2 is a conscious weakening of the figure from Job 1–2. The general idea of the divine council in Zechariah is easily drawn from its occurrence in other prophetic texts, and Zechariah's deviation from that tradition serves to elevate Joshua's role in the postexilic

Jerusalem community. The *satan* is silenced in Zechariah because (p. 222) Joshua's fate has already been determined by Yahweh alone and hence there is no need for the typical council discussion. Instead, Yahweh declares Joshua purified and grants him not only control over the earthly Temple's courts but also "the right of access among those who are standing here" (Zech 3:7), thereby assigning the prophetic role of participation in the divine council to a priestly figure. In sum, the differences between Zechariah and Job 1–2 are explained by the differing concerns of Zech 3, not by the latter adapting the former. The inclusion of the *satan* in two different divine council texts is best explained as independent adaptations influenced by the dualism of Persian Zoroastrianism in order to address the issue of divine justice in the postexilic period.

Another area to consider is possible appeals by Job's interlocutors to supernatural revelation rather than wisdom's typical derivation of its insights from reflection on human affairs and nature. An obvious example of this is Eliphaz's night vision of a "spirit" that speaks to him (Job 4:12–21). Nothing indicates that this was Yahweh, the usual source of prophetic revelation, but it is still a case of direct communication from the supernatural realm. As such it is unusual in a wisdom book, and the fact that it appears in Eliphaz's first speech is especially surprising since the spirit's central point is found elsewhere in the book. The spirit's words would be less jarring if they came during the second or third cycle of speeches, after the characteristically wisdom arguments of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have failed to persuade Job that he must have done something to deserve his current state.

Elihu also refers to "a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on mortals" (Job 33:15), repeating Eliphaz's words from 4:13. Unlike Eliphaz, however, who actually experienced an unspecified "spirit" himself, Elihu is describing how God (33:14) communicates with humans directly. Eliphaz's spirit makes a pronouncement, but for Elihu God uses a night vision to warn humans to turn from their deeds (vv. 16–19; cf. Job's complaint in 7:14) just as God uses suffering as a corrective warning (v. 19).

Some scholars have suggested that Elihu claims to speak on behalf of God, like a prophet. In his opening speech, Elihu invokes "the spirit in a mortal, the breath of Shaddai" as the source of human understanding (Job 32:8) and later he asserts that "I have yet something to say on God's behalf / I will bring my knowledge from far away" (Job 36:2–3). In neither case, however, is Elihu actually claiming to be an intermediary of the divine (Shields 2018, 185–188). The first text occurs as part of Elihu's justification for speaking despite his age, arguing that even the young like him can speak wisely. In this context, the verse challenges the idea that wisdom is restricted to the aged (v. 2, 4); instead, Elihu asserts that everyone is able to do so. He is not claiming that he in particular possesses the divine spirit in order to speak but rather that it is found in humans in general (*beenosh*), just as elsewhere he uses the phrase "the breath of Shaddai" to indicate that he is alive (Job 33:4; contrast 34:14; in Gen 2:7 Yahweh blows "breath" *neshamah*) into the human in Gen 2:7 to bring it to life, and the word in Gen 7:22 also indicates being alive. Similarly, Job 36:2–3 does not specify the source of Elihu's words but rather their object, as indicated by the preposition before "God." This is reinforced by v. 3b, where Elihu plans to at-

tribute righteousness to his maker, reflecting his overall purpose, namely to compensate for Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar failing to refute Job's justification (p. 223) of "himself rather than God" (32:2–3; cf. 32:12). In this light, Elihu's claim that "I will bring my knowledge from far away" (36:3) points to a physical (an Israelite in Edom?) or chronological distance, not a heavenly source.

In contrast to Elihu, Yahweh's divine speeches do constitute direct revelation in the book of Job. Although this feature is unexpected for a wisdom book, it is not out of place in the book itself. Job has repeatedly sought to plead his case directly with God (e.g., Job 10:2; 23:2–4) and his final oath of innocence (Job 29–31) includes his cry, "Let Shaddai answer me!" (31:35). One would expect this appeal to be followed by God's actual answer but that is delayed by Elihu's intervention. When Yahweh finally does speak to Job he does so from a "whirlwind" (38:1; 40:6), echoing Job's earlier concern that God would overwhelm him with a "tempest" (9:17). Finally, while the prose epilogue was originally separate from the poetry, "After the LORD had spoken these words to Job" (42:7) presupposes the preceding chapters. In short, the narrative development within the book requires that Yahweh respond to Job.

Despite these observations, Yahweh's speech should be distinguished from typical prophetic revelation on three grounds. First, Job is not commissioned to convey the content of the divine speech to others nor is there any indication in the book that he does so. Second, and more importantly, the content of the LORD's speech from the whirlwind does not correspond to prophetic messages in general, or to any of the Minor Prophets in particular. As is usually the case in the rest of the wisdom literature, there is no reference to the specifically yahwistic revelation to Israel nor any call to repentance. Third, Yahweh's speech comprises a series of questions that challenge Job concerning his knowledge about the natural world. This is an example of the Challenge to a Rival form, in which a sage demonstrates his intellectual superiority by asking an opponent about the extent of the latter's knowledge concerning various subjects in order demonstrate the inadequacy of his wisdom (Rowold 1985). In other words, Yahweh is acting like a typical wisdom teacher, using reflection on the natural world to educate Job. Of course, any communication from Yahweh constitutes divine revelation, but the purpose of his speeches in Job 38–42 is different from the typical supernatural revelation to and through prophets, the Minor Prophets included.

Conclusion

The Minor Prophets and Israel's wisdom traditions intersect with each other in various ways. A number of characteristic wisdom elements are found in Hosea, Jonah, and Habakkuk. These wisdom components are clustered in each of these Minor Prophets in sufficient quantity to indicate an intentional use of wisdom terms, forms, and/or motifs. These components are not extensive enough to transform these books into wisdom texts, but the wisdom elements are adapted instead to each book's prophetic function, conveying and reinforcing the prophetic message of each book. There are fewer prophetic ele-

ments in wisdom books, both in terms of the number of works involved and (p. 224) the number of prophetic elements in each. Not every proposed indication of prophetic influence in Proverbs and Job survives examination, but at the very least Lady Wisdom in Prov 1 acts like a prophet, and the divine council motif is used in Job 1–2 to set up the central issue of the book, namely Job's undeserved suffering, while Eliphaz experiences a supernatural revelation, and Yahweh's speeches from the whirlwind are by their very nature divine revelation. As with the wisdom elements in the Minor Prophets, so, too, the prophetic components in Proverbs and Job are also adapted to their own specific purpose, and neither Proverbs nor Job contains enough prophetic elements to approach becoming a prophetic book. The Minor Prophets are Minor Prophets, and wisdom is wisdom, but the twain do meet occasionally.

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The Minor Prophets in Early Judaism

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This essay explains that early Jewish interpreters read the Minor Prophets as portenders of the recent past and as predictors of a final restoration. With the exception of references to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Minor Prophets were almost always cited on an individual basis in the rabbinic period but were nevertheless viewed by most early Jewish interpreters as comprising a cohesive collection whose prophecies underscored the importance of repentance through prayer and fasting, and the theme of God's unbroken commitment to Israel. Given the common expectation of a messianic restoration among the early rabbinic community following the destruction of the second Temple, the essay concludes that by citing these prophets, early Jewish interpreters sought to imply that, just as its warnings of punishments had come to pass, the comforting predictions preserved in the Minor Prophets would soon be fulfilled.

Keywords: Midrash, interpretation, Rabbinic literature, Jerusalem Temple, Rome, messianism

(p. 229) SUBSTANTIAL evidence suggests that in the Greco-Roman period Jews viewed the books of the Minor Prophets as an authoritative and cohesive collection. Jewish writers quoted these prophets to bolster their predictions regarding a future eschatological period of judgment and restoration or to affirm the notion of divine justice, which included the punishment of Israel's enemies. While most early Jewish texts cite the Minor Prophets individually, others put them into conversation with one another and with other scriptural prophets, such as Isaiah. These tendencies can be traced in each of the books of the Twelve.

Hosea

Hosea's prophecies of destruction correlate with the years prior to the Assyrian exile of the Northern Israelite kingdom in the late eighth century BCE, but early Jewish inter-

preters atemporally interpreted Hosea's prophecies as concerning the transcendent relationship between God and Israel.

In the understanding of the Qumran sect, Hosea's book envisioned the early history of their own community, which comprised the true people of Israel. Two fragments of pesher commentaries to Hosea, 4QpHos[a] (4Q166) and 4QpHos[b] (4Q167), which paleographically date to the late first century BCE (Allegro and Anderson 1968, 31–32), interpret Hos 2:8–12, in which God speaks as a husband who will reclaim the gifts that he had given his unfaithful wife. The first pesher condemns Jews who have been led astray by the Gentiles (4Q166). The second cites verses from Hos 5, 6, and 8 as allusions to the Qumran sect, using phrases that also appear in Pesher Nahum (4Q167). The "lion of (p. 230) wrath," for instance, is mentioned in Pesher Nahum, likely in reference to Alexander Jannaeus, king of Judea in 103–76 BCE (Lim 2016, 429–430). References to Ephraim and to a "teacher" similarly parallel Pesher Nahum, which speaks of Ephraim, perhaps in reference to the Pharisees, and of a Teacher of Righteousness.[1]

Other Qumran documents incorporate Hosea's prophecies into their visions of the eschatological age. The first biblical citation in the Damascus Document is of Hos 4:16, which is cited in the context of God raising a Teacher of Righteousness to guide the sect on a just and pious path (CD 1:14). Later in the document, the writer cites Hos 5:10's prediction that God will vent wrath upon the princes of Judah when predicting that apostates will suffer divine punishment (CD 8:3; 4QpIsa[c] [4Q163 fr. 23, col. 2:14]).

Early interpreters translated Hosea's opaque prophecies with a good deal of license. The Septuagint, for instance, picks up on the vineyard imagery in Hos 14 and renders "we will fill our mouths with bulls" in 14:2 [Heb. 14:3]) as "we will fill our mouths with fruit." The Septuagint likewise translates the difficult Hebrew phrase in 14:8 [Heb. 14:9] as "in me your fruit is found." Philo follows this translation in his exposition of fruit as the symbol of the "instruction and good sense" that God gave to humankind.[2]

Early rabbinic and targumic texts interpret Hosea's marriage to a prostitute in Hos 1–3 allegorically. Where the Hebrew MT opens Hosea's prophecy with "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom," the Targum has "Go, speak a prophecy against the inhabitants of the idolatrous city, which continues to sin." Other interpretations, however, read God's instruction to Hosea as a literal rebuke for Hosea's doubting Israel's ability to repent. Hosea is meant to understand that, just as he would be hesitant to cast the impious Gomer out, so too is God hesitant to reject the people of Israel who have abandoned Him (*b. Pesaḥ* 87a).[3]

The rabbis likewise counterintuitively interpret other passages of Hosea as affirmations of God's everlasting commitment to Israel. One legend interprets Hos 1:9's "You are not my people and I am not your God" as a statement that, despite Israel's declaring themselves to not be God's people, God will remain committed to Israel (*Num. Rab.* 2:16).[4]

The rabbis note that Hosea descended from the tribe of Reuben (*Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 356–357; *Lev. Rab.* 6:6:142–143). One reason for this connection may be that Reuben was known for his ability to repent, having acknowledged his sin of sleeping with his father's concubine and returning to the pit into which Joseph had been thrown by his brothers in an attempt to save Joseph. Hosea likewise underscores the power of repentance, employing the root *shub* twenty-one times. Picking up on this theme, the rabbis preserved over forty separate midrashic legends regarding the invocation in Hos 14:2 to "take words with you and return to the LORD; say to him, 'Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips'" (Gottlieb 2016, 431). According to one tradition, "All the prophets called upon Israel to repent, but none like Hosea" (*Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 183b). Early Jewish interpreters thus mined the words of Hosea for transcendent meaning, focusing on the prophet's emphasis on repentance rather than on his harsh criticism of the people.

(p. 231) Joel

Besides a few citations of Joel in the Dead Sea Scrolls which exhort members of the sect to make proper penance, references to Joel and his book are scant in Second Temple literature.[5] Some texts speak of a prominent angel named Joel, but it is not clear whether these texts associate this angel with the prophet and his eponymous book.[6]

Rabbinic sources, however, reference Joel in numerous passages, particularly in connection to prayer and fasting. One Mishnaic passage notes that on fast days, the *nasi* and the chief of the judicial tribunal would go to the public square, and the elder among them would recite Joel 2:13's exhortation to "Rend your hearts and not your clothing; return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing" alongside Jonah 3:10's "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them." The public recitation of these two verses served as a declaration that God desired the Jews' repentance (*m. Ta'an* 2:1). Another Mishnah cites Joel 2:13 to argue that prayers should be said with careful intention (*m. Abot* 2:13). The Talmud likewise cites Joel in discussions concerning praying and fasting, noting that Joel 1:14's call to "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD" suggests that one should not work on a fast day (*b. Ta'an* 12b). Given that Joel 2:13 is cited in the Damascus Document and is referred to in the Mishnah as part of the liturgical service for fast days, it appears that by the rabbinic period this passage was viewed as a biblical source that mandated public prayer and penitence.

Amos

Reference to Amos's prophecies in the late third century BCE book of Tobit suggests that his book was considered authoritative at an early stage. In Tobit, the protagonist recalls

Amos's prediction that "festivals shall be turned into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation" as a portender of misfortune (Tob 2:6). In the Damascus Document, Amos's threatening prediction that God would take Israel "into exile beyond Damascus" (Amos 5:27) is reversed into a promise, inspiring the author's notion that Damascus marks the wilderness occupied by the sect. Read alongside Num 24:17's prediction that "a star shall come out of Jacob," the author predicts that only his community of "Damascus" would be saved in the end time. This interpretation was so fundamental to the mindset of the sect that scholars have come to refer to this document as the Damascus Document (CD 7:15–17).

The Talmud lists Amos as one of four contemporaneous prophets alongside Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah who was especially remembered for being mocked and abused by the (p. 232) Israelites and their kings (*b. Pesaḥ* 87a). In one tradition, Amos was killed by King Uzziah, who struck him on the head with a hot iron.[7] Israelites were even said to have accused Amos of conspiring against their king, who in some sources is identified as Jeroboam ben Joash (*b. Pesaḥ* 87a). Amos was known to be a stutterer who was mocked by the Israelites for his physical defect (Lev. Rab.10; Eccl. Rab. 1:1). While many traditions emphasize the challenges that Amos faced, others note that Amos must have been wealthy, since he identified himself as "a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees" (Amos 7:14; *b. Ned* 38a).

Amos's prophecies are used to support foundational rabbinic teachings. The Talmud cites Amos's prophecy that God will punish Moab for its bad treatment of Edom as proof that God is universally just (*b. B. Bat* 22a). Other rabbinic passages argue that Amos's prophecy against Gaza in 1:6 shows God's particular concern for the mistreatment of Israel at the hands of the gentiles (*Lam. Rab.* 1:56).

The rabbis also cite Amos's prophecies in conjunction with the coming messianic age. Amos 9:11's prediction that God will "raise up the booth of David that is fallen" is cited in the Talmud as proof for referring to the messiah as "the fallen one," which may have supported the rabbinic notion that the messiah would arise in an age of extreme suffering (*b. Sanh.* 96b–97a). The Tosefta, moreover, sees Amos 8:11, which predicts that "The time is surely coming…when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD," as a reference to those seeking the teachings of the Oral Torah in the end time (*t. ʻEd* 1:1; for additional rabbinic references to Amos, see Neusner 2007; Ratzabi 2009).

In the Talmud, the third-century Amora Rabbi Simlai credits Amos with being the only prophet to condense all of the commandments into a single axiom: David reduced the six hundred and thirteen commandments to eleven statements in Ps 15; Isaiah condensed them to six in Isa 33:15; Micah reduced all of the commandments to three statements in Mic 6:8; but only Amos reduced them all to one: "Seek Me and Live!" (*b. Mak.* 24a).

While Amos and Micah are loosely connected to one another in this passage, they are closely associated in other rabbinic passages. One legend interprets Micah's promise to raise against the incoming Assyrians "seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers" as

alluding to Amos, who is one of the eight rulers mentioned in the verse (Mic 5:5; *b. Sukkah* 52b, *Pirḳe R. ha-Ḳadosh*). Although there is no indication that Amos and Micah interacted, the association of some of the minor prophets with one another is a trope that often surfaces in rabbinic literature. Amos, and by association Micah, would become known as prophets who envisioned a final restoration in the coming messianic age.

Obadiah

Early interpreters believed that the prophet Obadiah was the same prophet mentioned in Kings who hid one hundred prophets to protect them from the murderous designs of (p. 233) Ahab's wife Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:7; 2 Kgs 1:13–15). The Talmud describes Obadiah's fear of God as exceeding Abraham's, since 1 Kgs 18:3 describes Obadiah as greatly fearing God, whereas Abraham is described in Gen 22:12 as one who fears God, without the word "greatly." The passage goes on to note that Obadiah learned to hide fifty prophets from the patriarch Jacob, who divided his family into three camps in preparation for meeting Esau (Gen 32:9), and it concludes by explaining why Obadiah focused his prophecies on Edom, noting that Obadiah himself was a converted Edomite. This prompted God to favorably compare Obadiah to another figure in Genesis, Esau, who is often linked with Edom (a symbolic stand-in for Rome or Christianity in rabbinic literature). Obadiah, God reasons, is superior to Esau, who was said to have lived with two righteous people, Isaac and Rebecca, but did not learn from them, whereas Obadiah lived with the evil Ahab and Jezebel, and retained his piety (*b. Sanh.* 39b). It is for this reason that Obadiah was selected to prophesy to Esau, that is, Edom. Obadiah is thus remembered in rabbinic tradition as a prophet with personal connections to both the Abrahamic family and its enemies.

Jonah

Early Jewish interpreters read the book of Jonah in light of 2 Kgs 14:21–25, which situates Jonah in the time of King Jeroboam of Israel. 2 Kings 14:25 notes that Jonah is from Gath Hepher, but rabbinic tradition identifies him as the son of the woman in Zarephath whom Elijah resurrects (1 Kgs 17:22; *Pirkei R. El.* 33). The boy's mother notes that "the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth (*emet*)" (1 Kgs 17:24.), which the rabbis apparently take as an allusion to Jonah's father, Amitai (Tiemeyer 2016, 574). Other traditions note that Jonah was Elisha's attendant who anoints Jehu (2 Kgs 9:1; *Seder Olam Rabbah* 19).

Jewish interpreters were intrigued by the figure of Jonah, who was swallowed by a giant fish (Hebrew *dag*, 1:17 [Heb. 2:1]). The earliest interpretive activity regarding this legend appears in the Septuagint, which renders *dag* as *ketous*, which means giant fish, or whale. This word is also used in reference to Jonah in 3 Maccabees, when Eleazar refers to the story in a speech about God's salvation (3 Macc 6:8). Jesus likewise uses the word when the scribes and Pharisees ask him for a sign, and he answers that he will only pro-

vide the sign of Jonah, who was in the belly of the *ketous* for three days and nights (Matt 12:39–40). Josephus cites the legend of Jonah using *ketous* but expresses doubt regarding the story's veracity (Josephus, *Ant.* 9.10.2).

While the Septuagint version of Jonah generally adheres closely to the Hebrew MT, it contains a few significant deviations from the Hebrew. Rather than declaring that the people of Nineveh have forty days to repent, as the MT does (Jon 3:4), Jonah gives the people just three days to repent in the Septuagint. This shorter duration may have been intended to add dramatic tension and a sense of urgency to the story. Another difference is that the Septuagint translates the *qiqayon*, the plant whose withering causes Jonah distress at the end of a story, as a gourd (*kolokunthe*), probably because the Greek and Hebrew words sound similar. While the Hebrew term likely refers to a castor oil plant, (p. 234) the Vulgate's translation of the Septuagint, *cucurbita*, led early interpreters to focus on the plant's fruit and its function in the story as a symbol of sustenance (Janick and Paris 2006, 349–357).

Some scholars believe that the book of Tobit includes a satirical revision of Jonah. In Tobit, Tobias kills a fish who tried to bite off his foot, and on the advice of an accompanying angel, uses the dead fish to chase away demons and cure blindness (Tob 6:8–9). This scene, coupled with the fact that Tobias is from Nineveh, which the author portrays as a sinful city which is ultimately destroyed, indicates that the author may be satirizing Jonah by advocating for a less universal theological orientation. Indeed, one Greek version of Tobit links Nineveh's destruction with Jonah's prophecy, while another links it with Nahum's prophecy (Tob 14:4). The reference to Nahum likely reflects the view that Jonah's story, which ends with the people of Nineveh repenting, contradicts the story of Tobit, which predicts the demise of the city (Finitsis 2016, 573).

Rabbinic texts cite the repentance of the people of Nineveh, particularly their fasting, wearing of mourning clothes, and communal prayer, as guidelines for how to repent, with one rabbi noting that God's seeing the Ninevites' "works" rather than their mourning indicates that God focuses on deeds more than on rituals of repentance (*b. Ta'an.* 15a–16a; cf. *m. Ta'an* 2:1).

Many rabbinic interpreters were troubled by the fact that Jonah's story contradicts prophecies in the book of Nahum, which depicts the Assyrians as refusing to repent. While early rabbinic sources presume that the repentance of Nineveh was sincere, later sources tend to depict the Ninevites as not truly repentant (*Targum to Jonah* Nah 1:1; *Pirkei R. El.* 43). It is possible, moreover, that the Jerusalem Talmud's preservation of legends depicting the Ninevites as not truly repentant and the Babylonian Talmud's preservation of legends depicting them as sincerely repentant can be understood as reflective of the different cultural contexts and attitudes toward gentiles held by the authors of these works (*y. Ta'an* 2:1; Sherwood 2000, 106–117; Shepardson 2011, 250). Other rabbinic sources resolve the tensions between the two books by suggesting that the Ninevites did repent, but only temporarily (*Tg. Ps-J* 1:1; *Pirkei R. El.*43; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah* 24:11; Tiemeyer 2016, 574). Again, the rabbinic tendency to read the Minor Prophets in light of one anoth-

er suggests that by the second century, the collection of Minor Prophets was viewed as a kind of canon within the canon.

Micah

Micah is rarely cited in Second Temple Jewish literature, but small fragments of a pesher on Micah have been found in Cave 1 of Qumran, which interpret Micah's condemnations of Samaria in Mic1:5–6 as a reference to the "Spouter of Lies" and interpret Mic 1:5's reference to Jerusalem as the "high place" of Judah as speaking of the Teacher of Righteousness (1Q14; Milik 1961, I, 77–80). Four tiny fragments citing Micah were like (p. 235) wise found in Cave 4, but it is unclear whether they represent a pesher of Micah or a copy of the book itself.

The rabbis identified the prophet Micah as the same Micah who hires a young Levite to serve as his idolatrous priest in the book of Judges. When Danites kidnap the Levite and Micah's idols, Micah protests, seemingly unaware that his idol worship has incurred God's wrath (Judg 17–18, especially 17:13). Rabbinic legends note that Micah was an idolater who left Egypt with the Israelites and who either made an idol in Egypt and brought it with him (*b. Sanh.* 103b) or made it in the desert using silver that he had taken from Egypt (*b. Pesaḥ* 117a). According to one tradition, Micah's name comes from the Hebrew word that means "crush," since Micah was one of the Israelite babies who were used as brickwork when the Israelites were forced to use their own children in their building projects. It was said that Moses saved and revived Micah, who had been crushed into a building (*Tanh*, Ki Tissa 9). Other traditions associate Micah with Sheba the son of Bichri or with Nebat the father of Jeroboam (*b. Sanh.* 101b).

Some rabbinic traditions underscore Micah's redeeming qualities. When the smoke of his sacrifices that he offered to his idol in Gareb mixed with the smoke of the sacrifices offered to God coming from the Tabernacle in nearby Shiloh, the angels sought to destroy Micah's idol, but God prevented it on account of Micah's hospitality to travelers (*b. Sanh.* 103b). Overall, Micah is distinct from the other Minor Prophets in that early interpreters associated him with a biblical character known for his impiety.

Nahum

As noted earlier, Jewish interpreters were troubled by the fact that Nahum and Jonah conflicted with one another concerning the Ninevites' repentance. In the book of Nahum, the unrepentant Ninevites are destined for punishment and destruction, whereas the book of Jonah sees the Ninevites as repentant. The Targum to Nahum resolves this tension by noting that the prophets prophesied at different times. While Nah 1:1 reads, "An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh," the Targum adds, "The oracle of the cup of malediction to be given to Nineveh to drink. Previously Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher, prophesied against her and she repented of her sins; and when she sinned again there prophesied once more against her Nahum of Beth

Koshi, as is recorded in this book" (*Tg. Nahum* 1:1, trans. Cathcart and Gordon 2015, 131. Cf. *Tg. Jonah* 4:5).

One of the most intriguing Qumran pesharim is Pesher Nahum, which interprets Nah 1:3–3:14 as speaking of a "furious young lion" who "hangs men alive." The pesher also refers to two Greek kings by name, Demetrius and Antiochus, and notes that Demetrius sought to enter Jerusalem, but God would not allow the city to fall until the "coming of the rulers of the Kittim." Given that Kittim usually refers to Romans, the "lion" in this pesher may be Alexander Jannaeus, who crucified eight hundred Pharisees in the early first century BCE, and whose reign was followed by civil strife in Judea which (p. 236) led to the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in 63 BCE. The Demetrius mentioned here would thus be Demetrius III Eucaerus, the Seleucid king who invaded Judea during Alexander's reign. Other scholars identify the "lion" as Demetrius I Soter, the Seleucid king whose attack killed Judah Maccabee in 160 BCE (1 Macc 9:1, 17–18; Rabinowitz 1978, 394).[8]

Despite this figurative reading of Nahum, most Jewish interpreters read Nahum literally. Josephus, for example, notes that Nahum's damning prophecies were fulfilled 115 years after the prophet lived with Assyria's destruction.[9]

Habakkuk

Like Jonah, the book of Habakkuk piqued the interest of Jewish biblical interpreters in the Second Temple period. One of the earliest references to Habakkuk appears in the Greek deuterocanonical text Bel and the Dragon, which recalls how the Jewish hero Daniel demonstrated the omnipotence of his God to members of the Persian court by proving that an idol is false, but is then thrown into a lions' den. Habakkuk saves Daniel from this grave danger: while making a stew in Judea for his field workers, an angel appears to Habakkuk and instructs him to bring the food to Daniel, whereupon Habakkuk is miraculously transferred to Babylon, where he feeds Daniel in the den (Bel 33–39). Different versions of Bel placed varying emphases on Habakkuk's role in the story. The Septuagint situates Habakkuk into a primary role in the book by titling it "From the prophecy of Habakkuk, the son of Joshua, of the tribe of Levi."[10]

Two versions of Hab 3 survive in Septuagint manuscripts, but the minority version known as the Barberini text is thought to have been written earlier (Howard 2007, 781). The Septuagint versions of Habakkuk, moreover, diverge from the Masoretic Text in significant ways. The Septuagint, for example, qualifies the MT's promise that the end time will certainly arrive. The Hebrew version of Hab 2:3–4 reads, "if it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith." The Septuagint replaces "Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them," with "if it draws back, my soul is not pleased in it, but the just shall live by my faith," which suggests God may delay the arrival of the appointed time should the people not deserve it. This would have served a third-century BCE Jewish audi-

ence well, since Jews at this time had yet to witness the restoration promised by the biblical prophets.

The Qumran Habakkuk pesher (1QpHab) provides substantial information regarding the sect's history and worldview. Well preserved and paleographically dated to the late first century BCE, the pesher interprets the first two chapters of Habakkuk as predictors of the sect's formation, which occurred following a conflict between an unidentified Wicked Priest and a Teacher of Righteousness. The pesherist speaks passionately against the Wicked Priest, interpreting Hab 2:5's invective against the "arrogant" people who "open their throats wide as Sheol; like Death they have never enough," as reference to the Wicked Priest who "forsook God and betrayed the pre (p. 237) cepts for the sake of riches" and "took the wealth of the peoples, heaping sinful iniquity upon himself." This priest confronted the Teacher of Righteousness on the Day of Atonement, going "to the house of his exile that he might confuse him with his venomous fury" (1QpHab 11:2–7). The accusations against the Wicked Priest do not center on his ritual impurity but on his moral defilement: The writer interprets Hab 2:17's prediction that "the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you…because of human bloodshed and violence to the earth, to cities and all who live in them," as alluding to the priest's abuse of the "poor," a term that is used self referentially regarding the sect itself (4Q434 fr. 1. 1:1–3; 4Q491c).

While scholars once identified the "Wicked Priest" as Jonathan or Simon Maccabee, this view has lost consensus, since the Judeans challenged the brothers' claim to high priesthood based on the fact that they were not descendants of Zadokites, and if the Wicked Priest were indeed Simon or Jonathan, one would one would expect to find this challenge in the pesher. Moreover, most scholars date the pesharim to around 100 BCE, at least a generation after Jonathan and Simon. The identity of the Wicked Priest, along with the Teacher of Righteousness and the Man of the Lie (1QpHab 2:2; 5:11; 11; Lim 20151038), remain obscure.

Most rabbinic references to Habakkuk emphasize the prophet's message in 3:13 that the righteous will be rewarded in the end time and their enemies will be destroyed (*Mek.Y* 30:1; 31:1; cf. *b. Meg.* 28b; *b*. San 97b). In the Talmud's discussion regarding the prophets who distilled God's commandments to just one verse, mentioned earlier, Rabbi Nachman bar Isaac rejects Rabbi Simlai's suggestion that Amos 5:4's statement, "Seek Me and live," encapsulates all of the 613 commandments, arguing instead that Habakkuk condensed all the commandments into his statement that "the righteous live by their faith" (Hab 2:4; *b.Mak.* 23b–24a). This represents yet another example of early Jewish interpreters putting the prophecies of the minor prophets into conversation—and tension—with one another.[11]

Zephaniah

Few early Jewish references to the book of Zephaniah survive. Fragments of a pesher of Zephaniah, however, have been discovered in Caves 1 and 4 of Qumran (1Q15; 4Q170). Pesher Zephaniah interprets Zephaniah 1:18's prediction that "on the day of the LORD's

wrath…a terrible end he will make all the inhabitants of the earth" as specifically applying to inhabitants of Judah. According to this reading, only the sect comprises the true people of Israel, and Zeph 1:18's generic *eretz* ("earth/land") applies to those Jews of the Land of Israel living outside of the sect who have sinned against God. Zephaniah's broad orientation of divine judgment was thus particularized by the Qumran sect.

Rabbinic sources, however, reframe Zephaniah's eschatological prediction of a destructive end-time into a more comforting message. One rabbinic source juxtaposes Zeph 1:15's "that day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish," with Exod (p. 238) 16:25's reference to the Sabbath as a day, suggesting that those who keep the Sabbath will not endure the painful period of judgment (*b. Šabb.*118a).

Haggai

Early Jewish writers saw connections between the book of Haggai and the first half of Zechariah and later, with Malachi. The author of 1 Esdras, for instance, repeatedly cites the books of Haggai and Zechariah together, and in the rabbinic period, the figure of Haggai is mentioned in conjunction with his contemporaries Zechariah and Malachi as the last three prophets of the Second Temple period (*Roš Haš.* 19b). Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were said to be legal experts who were involved in determining the length of a leap month (*b. Naz.* 53a), rendered foods pure or impure (*m.* Mid. 3:1; *b. Zebah.* 62a; *t. Ta'an.* 2:1, 3:5), and made changes regarding Temple service, such as enlarging the Temple altar and revising the schedule of priestly rotation (*b. Meg.* 3a.). They also oversaw Jonathan ben Uzziel's translation of the Prophets into Aramaic, which according to rabbinic legend, provoked a divinely wrought earthquake because it made God's secrets accessible to the Gentiles (b. Yoma 9b, b. Sotah 48b, b. Sang. 11a).

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were also associated with a general decline in the Jews' relationship with God that took place during their lifetimes (b. 'Abod. Zar 2b; b. Sanh. 97b; b. Nid. 70b). According to rabbinic sources, God stopped communicating with the Jews through prophecy after the time of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, but spoke occasionally through the divine voice (*bat kol*) (*b. Yoma.* 9b). The rabbinic notion that Haggai's book signals the period during which prophecy came to an end may be connected to the fact that Haggai's literary style was viewed as inferior to the style of other biblical prophets (y. Mak 2:6; y. Hor. 3:2, b. Yoma. 21b).

Perhaps the most cited of Haggai's prophecies is God's statement that "the silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (Hag 2:8), which Haggai utters in reference to the restoration of the Temple, but which rabbinic authors took to affirm God's permanent commitment to the Jews. Haggai's speeches are thus both a testament to God's enduring covenant with Israel and to the decline of Israel's access to the divine.

Zechariah

The opaque visions of Zechariah the son of Berechiah, which included prophecies of angels, the high priest Joshua, and his accuser Satan, perplexed early interpreters, who developed legends about Zechariah's priestly powers and his ability to combat devils. Since there was another Zechariah in the Hebrew Bible who was also a priest, Zechariah son of Jehoiada, whose murder by King Joash is recounted in the book of (p. 239) Chronicles (2 Chr 24:20–22), some interpreters conflated the two Zechariahs into a single figure. The Gospel of Matthew, for instance, identifies "Zechariah son of Barachiah," rather than Zechariah son of Jehoiada, as the priest who was murdered at the Temple (Matt 23:35).

Zechariah's vision of Satan accusing the high priest Joshua of iniquity likely served as the inspiration for later legends regarding the archangel Michael's clash with the devil. In the *Assumption of Moses*, Michael combats with the devil while burying Moses, citing God's admonishment of Satan in Zech 3:2, "The LORD rebuke you!" This scene is also preserved in the early Christian text the Epistle of Jude (Jude 9).[12]

While much of Zechariah's book condemns Israel's enemies, rabbinic tradition takes these condemnations as direct reproaches against the Jewish people. The Jerusalem Talmud notes that Zechariah's prophecy against Lebanon is in fact a prophecy against the Temple. Prior to the Temple's destruction, a number of ominous signs occurred in the Temple, including the Temple gates mysteriously opening overnight. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai rebuked the Temple on the basis that the rabbis were already aware that the Temple would be destroyed because of Zechariah's exclamation, "Open your doors, O Lebanon, so that fire may devour your cedars! (Zech 11:1)."[13] The rabbinic association between Lebanon and the Temple may have derived from the fact that Solomon purchased cedar from Lebanon when building the Temple (1 Kgs 5:13–14). Counterintuitive readings of the Minor Prophets in rabbinic literature thus go both ways: while some passages which condemn Israel are read by the rabbis as words of comfort to Israel, other passages which condemn Israel's enemies are read as words of warning.

Malachi

Malachi was regarded not only as the last of the Minor Prophets but the last of all prophets: one rabbinic passage notes that "when Malachi died the Holy Spirit departed from Israel" (B. Sot. 48b). Since Malachi is not a proper noun but means "my messenger," rabbinic traditions sought to identify the prophet: Rabbi Nahman believes Malachi is Mordecai, while Rabbi Joshua son of Korha suggests that he is the priest and scribe Ezra (*b. Meg.* 15a), a tradition that would also surface in Christian and later rabbinic sources. The Aramaic targum to Mal 1:1 *Tg. Ps-J.* adds to the introductory phrase "The word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi," the clause, "whose name is Ezra the Scribe," and Jerome makes a similar note in his introduction to Malachi (Schaff 2007, 501). Malachi's primary

significance in early Jewish interpretation lies in his association with Zechariah and Haggai as the last of the prophets.

(p. 240) Conclusion

Early Jewish interpreters read the Minor Prophets as portenders of the recent past and as predictors of a final restoration. With the exception of references to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Minor Prophets were almost always cited on an individual basis in the rabbinic period. They were nevertheless viewed by most early Jewish interpreters as comprising a cohesive collection whose prophecies underscored the importance of repentance through prayer and fasting, as well as the theme of God's unbroken commitment to Israel and concern for justice. For the rabbis, these prophets were witnesses to the first Temple's destruction, the Babylonian exile, and the consequent rebuilding of the second Temple. Given the widespread expectation of a messianic restoration following the Roman destruction of the second Temple, citing these prophets implied that the words of the Minor Prophets, which included both rebuke and comfort, would soon be fulfilled.

One of the most widely cited rabbinic legends which interprets prophetic literature intertextually concerns a scene of destruction that predicts an ultimate restoration. When Akiba and his colleagues walk upon the recently destroyed Temple Mount and Akiba begins to laugh, his colleagues respond in shock and ask him why he has laughed. Akiba responds by noting that the words of Micah, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins," (Mic 3:12) had already been fulfilled. It was therefore only a matter of time before Zechariah's prediction that Jerusalem "shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zech 8:5) would be likewise fulfilled (*b. Mak.* 24b). This legend is an optimal example of how the rabbis read the Minor Prophets in light of one another and thus made even their darkest prophecies filled with eschatological hope.

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Notes:

(1.) For “the lion of wrath,” see 4QpHos^{b} fr. 2:2 and 4QpNah, frs. 3–4.1.5–5. For “Ephraim,” see 4QpHos^{b} fr. 2:3 and 4QpNah frs. 3–4.1.12; frs. 3–4.2.2, 8; frs. 3–4.3. For “teacher,” see 4QpHos^{b} frs. 5–6.2 and 4QpNah.

(2.) Hosea 14:8 in the NRSV. Philo, *Noah’s Work as a Planter*, 33.138; Cf. *On the Change of Names*, 24.139 for another citation of the same verse.

(3.) For a full reception history on Hosea’s marriage in Judaism and Christianity, see Bitter (1975).

(4.) On the rabbinic practice of reading biblical text counter-intuitively in midrashic literature, see Fishbane (2001, 132–159).

(5.) Joel 2:12–13’s instruction to “return to God with crying and fasting” is cited in 4Q266 11 5 and 4Q270 7 i 19.

(6.) L. A. E. 43:5; Slavonic 31:2, 32:1; *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 2:9.

(7.) Gedaliah ibn YaH¨yah (c. 1515–c. 1587) mentions this tradition in his “Shalshelet haḲabbalah,” which is quoted by Heilprin (1878–1882) i. 3110. In *Lives of the Prophets*, likely an early Christian source with possibly Jewish origins, Amos was tortured by the priest Amaziah, a priest who accuses Amos of conspiring against Jeroboam, and Amos is later killed by Amaziah’s son (Amos 7:10–12; *Lives*, 7).

(8.) 1 Macc 9:1, 17–18; Vermes 1973, 40–41; Rabinowitz 1978, 394–399.

(9.) Josephus comments that he wants to write at length about the many prophecies of Nahum, noting that “many more things beside did this prophet prophesy about Nineveh, which I have not thought it necessary to mention, but have omitted in order not to seem tiresome to my readers” (*Ant.*, 9.11.3).

(10.) The tradition that Habakkuk receives a prophecy instructing him to go to Babylon to help Daniel endured and is mentioned in the *Lives of the Prophets*, which ties Habakkuk’s trip to Babylon to save Daniel into his own prophecies regarding the restoration of the people following the Babylonian exile (*Lives* 12).

(11.) By the medieval period, there was a strong association between the ancient site of Hukkok and the burial site of Habakkuk, a tradition that may be dated to rabbinic times. Since Hukkok is mentioned in the book of Joshua and therefore precedes the prophet, it is probable that the prophet came to be associated with this site because of his etymological connection to Hukkok (Josh 19:34). The Hebrew names of the site are striking in their similarities.

(12.) Simkovich (2018, 267).

(13.) Yoma 6:3. Cf. B. Yoma 4:1. *Lives of the Prophets* records a similar tradition, associating the ripping of the *parokhet* with Habakkuk (*Lives* 12). This verse may also have been influential for the tradition regarding the Temple curtain tearing at the moment of Jesus’s death preserved in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 15:38; Matt 27:51; Lk 23:45). In a similar legend, Josephus reports that the eastern gate of the inner court of the temple was seen to open on its own about the sixth hour of the night, which portended future disaster (*J. W.*, 6.293).

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The Minor Prophets in Early Christianity

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay seeks to examine the evidence from early Christianity (the New Testament and the church fathers) not only for the transmission of the Twelve (the Minor Prophets) as a single work but also for the reading of the Twelve as a unified composition. It identifies several examples of exegesis shaped by the reading of the Twelve as a single composition, showing that early Christian writers were aware of the larger context of the Book of the Twelve from which citations are made. Discussion focuses on three areas: citation formulae, text and canon (including manuscripts and canonical lists, and the early history of interpretation.

Keywords: Minor Prophets, the Twelve, early Christianity, New Testament, church fathers, citation formulae, history of interpretation

RECENT scholarly interest in the reading and interpretation of the Twelve as a single work raises the question of whether the transmission of the Twelve together in antiquity exerted an influence on the ancient readership. The present essay seeks to examine the evidence from the early Christian church not only for the transmission of the Twelve as a single work but also for the reading of the Twelve as a unified composition. This analysis will focus on three areas: citation formulae, text and canon, and interpretation.

Citation Formulae

New Testament writers employ a wide variety of introductions to their citations from the Twelve, some more telling than others. There are thirty citations found in ten of the twenty-seven books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews). These cover the three major divisions of the literature (Gospels and Acts, Pauline Epistles, and General Epistles and Revelation). The Gospel of Matthew contains a full third of the citations. Some of the citations do not have an introductory formula (Matt 9:13 [Hos 6:6]; 10:35–36 [Mic 7:6]; 12:7 [Hos 6:6], 40 [Jonah 1:17]; Luke

23:30 [Hos 10:8]; Rom 10:13 [Joel 3:5 (Eng., 2:32)]; Gal 3:11 [Hab 2:4]; Eph 4:25 [Zech 8:16]; Heb 10:37–38 [Hab 2:3–4]).

The most frequent type of citation formula simply indicates that what follows is what is "written" (*gegraptai* or *gegrammenon*) (Matt 11:10 [Mal 3:1]; 26:31 [Zech 13:7]; Mark 14:27 [Zech 13:7]; Luke 7:27 [Mal 3:1]; John 12:15 [Zech 9:9]; Rom 1:17 [Hab 2:4]; 9:13 [Mal 1:2–3]). Related to this are John 19:37 (Zech 12:10) ("another writing says" [*hetera graphē legei*]) and 1 Cor 15:54–55 (Hos 13:14) ("then the word that is written will occur" [*tote gevēsetai ho logos ho gegrammenos*]). This latter introductory formula in 1 Cor 15:54–55 precedes a citation from Isa 25:8 immediately followed by the citation from Hos 13:14, (p. 244) which suggests that "the word that is written" is a way to refer to the scriptural corpus or the prophetic corpus generally. Most unusual among introductions to citations from the Twelve is Heb 12:26 (Hag 2:6): "but now he has proclaimed saying."

It is quite rare to find one of the Twelve mentioned by name in New Testament introductions to citations. The only example unanimously attested by all the major witnesses is the introduction to the combined citation from Hos 2:23 [Heb. 2:25] and Hos 1:10 [Heb.2:1] in Rom 9:25–26: "as indeed in Hosea he says." Alexandrian and Byzantine witnesses to Acts 2:16 include the name "Joel" in the introduction to the citation from Joel 2:28–32 [Heb. 3:1–5] in Acts 2:17–21: "but this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel." The Western text does not include Joel's name. This dearth of names from the Twelve may be compared to New Testament citations from Isaiah. In nearly a third out of over sixty citations, the prophet Isaiah is mentioned by name. Such a situation may suggest that the Twelve were not primarily thought of by the New Testament writers as twelve separate prophets but as a unit.

Two citations from the Twelve are introduced with names of prophets from outside of the Twelve. In Matt 27:9–10, a citation from Zech 11:12–13 is introduced as "what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet." Some witnesses attempt to "correct" this to "Zechariah" or "Isaiah," but "Jeremiah" is generally considered the more difficult reading that gave rise to the others. Attempts to find the cited text in some form within the book of Jeremiah have not been successful (e.g., Jer 18:1–12; 32:6–9). It is possible that Jeremiah's name is given here as the head of the prophets (cf. b. B. Bat. 14b), but this practice is not attested elsewhere in the New Testament. It is well known that Zechariah frequently cites from Jeremiah as one of "the former prophets" (e.g., Zech 1:4; cf. Jer 25:5–7). It has also been demonstrated that the composer of the Twelve consistently cites from Jeremiah in his seam work (Shepherd 2018, 23–36). Thus, it is quite possible that the Zechariah text cited in Matthew was known to be attributed to Jeremiah yet not included in the book that bears his name.

The other citation from the Twelve introduced with the name of a nonmember of the Twelve occurs in Mark 1:2. According to Alexandrian and Western witnesses, the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ the Son of God is "just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet." Then follows a citation that consists of a conflation of the wording of Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1. The citation from Isaiah (Isa 40:3) subsequently occurs in Mark 1:3.

Byzantine witnesses adjust to allow for the presence of the Malachi quote: “just as it is written in the prophets.” The most probable reading of one seventh-century Old Latin witness has “just as it is written in Isaiah and in the prophets.” This last reading has an interesting point of contact with a reference to Isaiah and the Twelve in Josephus’s writings: “As for this prophet [Isaiah], confessedly godly and wonderful with regard to the truth, confident not to have spoken anything false at all, wrote down everything that he prophesied in books and left them to be recognized from the end by people in turn; and not this prophet alone, but also others, twelve in number, did the same” (*Ant*. 10:35). It may very well be that the Old Latin witness to Mark 1:2 should be read as an introduction to citation from Isaiah and the Twelve rather than as an introduction to citation from Isaiah and the prophets generally (or Malachi as one specific book from the larger prophetic corpus).

(p. 245) The remaining citation formulae mention “the prophet” or “the prophets.” Matthew 2:5 introduces the citation from Mic 5:2 [Heb. 5:1] in Matt 2:6, “for thus it is written by the prophet.” It is not clear whether “the prophet” here is the prophet whose name is found in the superscription of the cited book or someone responsible for the Book of the Twelve. The same may be said for Matt 2:15 (Hos 11:1)—“in order that what was spoken by the LORD through the prophet might be fulfilled”—and Matt 21:4 (Zech 9:9)—“in order that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled.” Perhaps the most telling of all the New Testament citation formulae for the Twelve is found in the introduction to Amos 5:25–27 in Acts 7:42–43: “as it is written in the book of the prophets.” Here the citation from Amos is said to be from a singular book made up of a plurality of prophets. What could this be other than the Book of the Twelve? In Acts 13:40–41, a citation from Hab 1:5 is introduced as “what is said in the prophets.” It is possible that this is a reference to the prophetic corpus (cf. Dan 9:2) or to the prophetic scriptures generally (cf. Rom 1:2), but when compared to Acts 7:42–43, it appears more likely that “the prophets” refers to the Book of the Twelve. Likewise, the introduction to the citation from Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–17 seems to refer to the Book of the Twelve: “And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written” (Acts 15:15).

This last set of examples, in which there seems to be an awareness of the larger context of the Book of the Twelve from which the citations are made, may be compared to later Christian citations from the Twelve. For instance, Justin Martyr in his *1 Apology* (52:10–12) introduces a citation from Joel 2:12–13 and Zech 12:9–14, which is sandwiched between Isa 43:5–6 and Isa 29:13 on one end and Isa 63:17 and 64:10 on the other (cf. Mark 1:2–3; *Ant*. 10:35), as that which has been predicted by Zechariah the prophet. In *Dialogue with Trypho* (22), Justin introduces a quote from Amos 5:18–6:7 as that which is said by “Amos, one of the Twelve.” Cyril of Alexandria, in his commentary on Amos 4:10, refers to material in Hos 5:13; 8:14 as the “beginning” of the book he is currently discussing: “So he says, *I sent death upon you in the way of Egypt*, that is, as in the Egyptians’ bypassing you; then it was that *I put your camps to the torch*, meaning, I utterly overthrew your walled and fortified cities. Now, he said as much also in the beginning: ‘Israel went to Assyrians, and Judah made fortified cities. I shall send fire on his cities, and it will consume their foundations’” (Cyril of Alexandria 2008, 62). As Robert Hill

points out, “Cyril now sees The Twelve as one work—in Theodoret’s phrase, ‘the book of The Twelve’” (Cyril of Alexandria 2008, n18).[1]

Text and Canon

Early Christian authors do not show a preference for a specific textual grouping (e.g., proto-MT, LXX, etc.) in their citations from the Twelve. Furthermore, citations are not to be confused with text-critical decisions. Some citations might correspond to what modern scholars would reconstruct as the “original” reading, but the form in which a text is cited depends upon a variety of factors. In many cases, the form of the cited text simply (p. 246) suits the point that the author is trying to make. In many others, the form merely serves the language needs of the intended audience. Early Jewish Christians had access to the Bible in Hebrew and Aramaic. Early Greek-speaking Christians had access to the Bible through the LXX. Early Latin-speaking Christians had access to the Bible through the Old Latin and eventually through the Latin Vulgate. The early Syriac-speaking church had the Peshitta. It is often said that the LXX was the Bible of the early church, but this is an overstatement of the evidence. Citations from the Twelve are occasionally LXX-like (e.g., Acts 2:17–21 [Joel 2:28–32 (Heb. 3:1–5)]; 7:42–43 [Amos 5:25–27]; 13:41 [Hab 1:5]; 15:16–17 [Amos 9:11–12]; 1 Cor 15:55 [Hos 13:14]; Heb 10:37–38 [Hab 2:3–4]; 12:26 [Hag 2:6]), but even these do not correspond exactly to witnesses to the LXX.[2] Moreover, early Christian authors like Origen and Jerome were not ignorant of the differences between the proto-MT and the LXX—differences that were often due to the presence of a different Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the LXX. The most important structural difference between the Twelve in the MT and the Twelve in the LXX is the arrangement of the first six books (MT: Hos–Joel–Amos–Obad–Jonah–Mic; LXX: Hos–Amos–Mic–Joel–Obad–Jonah).

Lists of canonical books in the early church uniformly count the Twelve as a single book. These lists typically consist of the same books found in witnesses to the Hebrew Bible.[3] With the exception of Jerome, however, the authors of the lists do not make claims about the specific order in which the books are to appear. The LXX codices of the fourth and fifth centuries (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus) vary in their arrangements of the books. They also include apocryphal works, but these codices are best understood “more as service books than as a defined and normative canon of scripture” (Ellis 2004, 678).[4] Two of these codices (Vaticanus and Alexandrinus) place the Twelve prior to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Melito, bishop of Sardis, writes to Onesimus (c. 170 CE) concerning “the Law and the Prophets” (cf. Luke 24:27, 44) and lists the names of “the books of the old covenant” that he has learned (Eusebius, *Hist*. *Eccl*. 4:26, 13–14): “of Moses five, Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy; Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, of Kingdoms four, of Things Omitted [i.e., Chronicles] two, of Psalms David, the Proverbs of Solomon (that is, Wisdom), Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job; of Prophets: of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of the Twelve in one book (*tōn dōkeka en monobiblō*), Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras.” It is important to note here that Melito does not simply say “the twelve prophets” (cf. Sir 49:10) but adds

"in one book" (cf. Acts 7:42), suggesting that the Twelve are to be read together just as the contents of the other "books" listed are to be read together. Origen (c. 185–254 CE) says that there are twenty-two canonical books according to Hebrew tradition (the same as the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet), but when he lists the books, he only mentions twenty-one (Eusebius, *Hist*. *Eccl*. 6:25, 1–2). Ellis suggests that the Twelve, counted as one book, has been accidentally omitted by a scribe (Ellis 2004, 661).

Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzus, Epiphanius, Hilary, Rufinus, and the Council of Hippo all list and count the Twelve as one book (Ellis 2004, 666–674). Augustine distinguishes between the Twelve ("minor") Prophets, which he lists individually according to the MT order rather than in the LXX order, and the four "major" prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel). These authors place the prophetic (p. 247) books last with the Twelve at their head, but they do not argue that this is the "correct" order or make a point about the meaning of this order over against other arrangements of the books. Jerome, on the other hand, appears to depart from this order intentionally based on his knowledge of the Hebrew canon. The prologue to his Latin translation of Samuel and Kings lists the books according to the threefold shape of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Additionally, Jerome insists in the prologue to his translation of the Twelve that the Twelve Prophets constitute one book (*unum librum esse duodecim Prophetarum*) and should appear in the order found in Hebrew rather than in the order found in the LXX codices of the fourth and fifth centuries. Jerome, it seems, does not merely receive the Twelve as a collection of books to be transmitted together but as a composition to be read as a single work.

The Reading of the Twelve in Early Christianity

For New Testament authors and the early church fathers, prophecy rather than law was central to the reading of the Old Testament (Diestel 1869, 7; Skarsaune 1996, 392, 414). The entire Old Testament was one great prophecy about Christ, and its authors were prophets (Diestel 1869, 9, 18–19).[5] As Paul says in his epistle to the Romans, "For whatever things were written before, for our instruction were they written, in order that through the patience and comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4; cf. Rom 4:22–25; 1 Cor 10:11; *1 Clement*). The following discussion does not seek to catalogue the various ways in which early Christians cited from the Twelve (see Longenecker 1999) but instead it attempts to identify examples of exegesis shaped by the reading of the Twelve as a single composition.

It is one thing to note that the Twelve were transmitted together in antiquity. It is quite another to say that they were read together as a single work in the manner of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Even if a modern reader were to identify compositional activity that intentionally brought together the Twelve as a unity, is there evidence that ancient readers were aware of this or influenced by this? Ehud Ben Zvi has answered this question in the negative (Ben Zvi and Nogalski 2009, 47–96), though he concedes that the Twelve were transmitted together. He does not deal with the internal evidence for compositional

activity in any thoroughgoing way. He also does not address the evidence for the reading of the Twelve in the New Testament and the early church. His argument primarily has its basis in Josephus, Qumran *Pesharim*, the Talmud, witnesses to different sequences of the Twelve, and prophetic superscriptions.

Every claim about ancient reading of the Twelve as a single composition presupposes a view about the way in which the Book of the Twelve was put together. Recent work on the Twelve has tended to focus either on the hypothetical prehistory of the composition (i.e., the stages of its literary development) or on the mere effect of reading the Twelve (p. 248) together (e.g., thematic similarities). The present essay assumes that the Book of the Twelve shows signs of a single compositional stratum that develops a program set forth in Hos 3:4–5 (Shepherd 2008). The three criteria for identifying the seam work of the prophetic composer responsible for this are (1) distinct material at the end of one book that connects to distinct material at the beginning of the next; (2) development of the program in Hos 3:4–5; and (3) citation from the book of Jeremiah (Shepherd 2018, 23–36).

One example of such reading from the Twelve occurs in Acts 15:15–18. In this account, James cites from Amos 9:11–12 to settle the dispute at the Jerusalem Council about whether Gentiles must keep the law of Moses in order to become Christians (Acts 15:5). The decision that Gentiles can be part of the people of God apart from the law is said to agree with "the words of the prophets" (plural) (Acts 15:15). That is, the following citation from Amos is representative of something developed within "the book of the prophets" (Acts 7:42). The text of Amos 9:11–15 is part of a seam that connects the end of Amos to Obadiah. These last five verses are not part of the main body of the book—Nations (Amos 1:3–2:16), Words and Woes (Amos 3–6), Visions (Amos 7:1–9:10). They speak of restoration rather than judgment. These verses also develop the program of the Twelve, which says that Israel will "seek" the LORD and David their king in the last days (Hos 3:5).[6] According to the MT of Amos 9:11–12, the LORD will raise up the fallen booth of David in that day in order that the people may "possess" (*yarash*) the remnant of Edom, which represents all the nations upon whom the LORD's name is called. Acts 15:17 cites this in the form of the LXX found in Codex Alexandrinus, which reflects a slightly different Hebrew text with a very similar meaning: that the remnant of "mankind" (*adam*) may "seek" (*darash*) "the LORD" (*et*).[7] Thus, Edom represents the rest of humanity, the Gentiles (cf. Isa 34). They, too, will seek the LORD in the last days. This reading is confirmed by the following book of Obadiah, which speaks not only of the historical judgment of Edom (Obad 1–14; cf. Jer 49:9, 14–16) but also of the "dispossession" of unbelieving Gentiles and the "possession" (*yarash*) or inclusion of believing Gentiles in the LORD's kingdom in the Day of the LORD (Obad 15–21), including Edom (Obad 19, 21). Such an interest in the inclusion of the Gentiles continues in Jonah, where Nineveh, "the great city" (Jonah 1:2; 3:2, 3; 4:11; cf. Gen 10:11–12), plays the role that Edom has in the Amos-Obadiah sequence (cf. Nahum). Nineveh's faith (Jonah 3:5) and the assertion of the LORD's right to have compassion on the city (Jonah 4:11) are symbolic of the inclusion of the nations in God's plan. This development of the program of the Twelve provides the larger context and warrant for Paul's citation of Hos 2:1, 25 (Eng. 1:10; 2:23) in Rom

9:24–26. For Paul, the text of Hosea speaks not merely of the restoration of the northern kingdom of Israel but of the formation of a Jewish-Gentile people of God.

Another example of reading in the context of the Twelve occurs in John's Gospel. Both Matthew and John cite Zech 9:9 in conjunction with Ps 118:25–26 in their accounts of Jesus's "Triumphal Entry," albeit in different ways (Matt 21:1–11; John 12:12–19). Both also show an awareness of the larger context of Zechariah (Matt 26:31; 27:9–10; John 19:37).[8] John's prologue introduces Jesus as the Word who was God already "in the beginning" and who became flesh and "dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). This language (p. 249) echoes a prophetic vision from earlier in the book of Zechariah: "Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For look, I am about to come to you, and I will dwell in your midst, the prophetic utterance of the LORD" (Zech 2:10 [Heb. 2:14]). This verse bears a strong textual link to Zeph 3:14–15: "Shout, Daughter Zion. Cry out, O Israel. Be glad and exult with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem. The LORD has removed your judgments, he has turned away your enemy. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst. You will never be afraid again." The text of Zech 9:9 is then a conflation of the wording of these two: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion. Cry out, Daughter Jerusalem. Look, your king, he is coming to you. Righteous and delivered is he. [He is] afflicted and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, a foal." Thus, the coming of the LORD as king is now envisioned as the coming of the LORD in the flesh as the ideal Davidic king (cf. Isa 9:6–7 [Heb. 9:5–6]; 10:21) (see Steiner 2013, 33–60).[9] This suits John's purpose well. He thus combines the wording of Zeph 3:15b and Zech 9:9 to make the connection clear: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt." Later in the Gospel, John cites from Zech 12:10 in such way that the LORD's reference to himself as the pierced one and his subsequent reference to the Davidic king in the third person as the one for whom the people mourn become a single reference to Jesus as the pierced LORD (John 19:37; see also Matt 24:30; Rev 1:7).

Conclusion

Sufficient evidence exists from citation formulae, lists of canonical books, and examples of exegesis to conclude that at least some of the earliest Christians not only received the Twelve transmitted together but also read the Twelve as a single composition. This was by no means the only way of reading the Twelve in the early church, but for the New Testament authors and those most deeply influenced by them, the Book of the Twelve was more than a collection of separate books. Their citations from individual passages in the Twelve must be understood within the context of the larger literary complex of the whole.

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Notes:

([1.]) Didymus the Blind read Zechariah as the eleventh of the twelve (Didymus the Blind 2006, 27).

([2.]) Felix Albrecht has recently shown that Justin Martyr’s citations from the Twelve bear witness to the “*kaige*” revision of the Old Greek toward the proto-MT (see the Greek Minor Prophets scroll from Nahal Hever) (Albrecht 2013, 349–357).

([3.]) “There is no evidence whatever that any of the Apocrypha ever had a place in any of the three divisions of the canon” (Beckwith 2004, 83–84).

([4.]) Jerome considered the apocrypha useful for edification of the church but not for confirmation of doctrine (Ellis 2004, 675–677).

([5.]) Even Theodore of Mopsuestia, who insisted on what he called the “historical” sense despite his lack of Hebrew knowledge, considered the “truth” of passages like Mic 5:1 and Zech 9:9–10 to be related to Christ, although he thought Zerubbabel was the historical referent (Hidal 1996, 552–553). Cf. John Chrysostom (Hidal 1996, 562). Note also Lucas Van Rompay’s comments about Aphrahat: “Rather than reading the OT from the viewpoint of the NT, he read the NT from the viewpoint of the OT. This distinction may be subtle; it has, however, considerable consequences. The NT does not simply take the place of the OT, rather Christianity is given a place within the framework of the OT” (Van Rompay 1996, 620).

(6.) The beginning of Obadiah (Obad 1–5) cites from Jeremiah's message about Edom (Jer 49:9, 14–16). Thus, the Amos-Obadiah seam meets the three criteria for identification of the activity of the prophetic composer of the Twelve: distinctiveness, program development, and citation from Jeremiah.

(7.) The *aleph* and the *taw* (the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet) are interpreted as the one who is the first and the last (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12), the *alpha* and the *omega* (Rev 1:8, 17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13). See also Zech 12:10 for this use of the object marker.

(8.) "In his theological concept he [John] not only considers the individual Scripture passage which he refers or alludes to, but also its *context*. This proves that he not only utilizes Old Testament terms and concepts possibly handed down to him, but that his reference to the Old Testament developed to a considerable extent out of his independent studies of the text" (Hübner 1996, 360). The early church father Ambrose sees an inner-Twelve connection between Hos 11:1 (cited in Matt 2:15) and Zech 9:9 (cited in Matt 21:5) (Ferreiro 2003, 259–260). For the development of the new exodus theme that Ambrose identifies here, see Shepherd (2017, 120–136).

(9.) The text of Zech 9:9–10 has numerous connections to other "messianic" passages (e.g., Gen 49:8–12; Num 24:7–9; Isa 2:1–5; 11:1–10; 52:7; 53:7, 11; 61:3; Jer 23:5–6; Ezek 34:24–25; Mic 4:1–5; 5:2–6 [Heb. 5:1–5]; Nah 1:15 [Heb. 2:1]; Hab 3:13; Hag 2:9, 22; Pss 22:27–28 [Heb. 22:28–29]; 24; 72:3, 8; 118:22–26). See also Goswell (2016, 7–19).

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The Minor Prophets in Islam

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explains the ways in which the Minor Prophets do (and do not) appear in Islam. Islam does not share the concept of the "minor" or "twelve prophets" known from Jewish and Christian Bible, but Jonah (Yūnus) appears in the Quran, and Muslim exegetes mention the names of Habakkuk and Obadiah. Jonah is mentioned four times in the Quran, the name is usually used as the title for the tenth surah, and Muslim exegesis elaborates the full biblical story of Jonah with particular emphasis on his being swallowed by the big fish. Zechariah as a prophet other than the father of John the Baptist is linked to several Quran passages. Muslim Bible exegesis refers by name to all of the twelve prophets and interprets select passages from the biblical books attributed to these prophets as foretelling the coming of Muhammad and Islam.

Keywords: Jonah, Quran, Muslim, Muhammad, Zechariah, Obadiah, Habakkuk, Islam

(p. 253) ALTHOUGH all of the prophets mentioned by name in the Quran are also found in the Bible, Islam does not share with Judaism and Christianity the concept of the "minor" or "twelve prophets" known from the Septuagint and the Hebrew Bible. A number of the Twelve Prophets, notably Jonah (Yūnus), are mentioned or alluded to in the Quran, and Muslim exegesis identifies several groupings of prophets linked with biblical Israel.

Muslim veneration of certain prophets and saints at their tombs includes sites associated with several of the Twelve Prophets. Exegetical expansions on the "tales of the prophets" (*qiṣṣaṣ al-anbīyā'*) in more popular, often illustrated, Islamic histories narrate stories about some of the Twelve Prophets, and Muslim scholarship highlights passages from the Twelve Prophets to illustrate biblical prophesies foretelling the coming of the prophet Muhammad and Islam.

Prophets in the Quran

The prophets mentioned by name in the Quran include the following: Adam (mentioned 25 times by name), Idris (1), Noah (43), Hūd (7), Ṣāliḥ (10), Abraham (69), Ishmael (12), Isaac (7), Jacob (16), Lot (27), Joseph (27), Shuʿayb (11), Job (4), Dhū al-Kifl (2), Moses (137), Aaron (20), David (16), Solomon (17), Elijah (1), Elisha (2), Jonah (4), Zechariah (7), John (5), Jesus (25), and Muhammad (4). The Iraqī scholar Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Saʿd (d. 845), well-known for his biography of the prophet Muhammad and biographical dictionary of the first generations of Muslims, claims that God sent 1,000 prophets, and other Muslim sources put the number as high as 124,000 or 224,000.

(p. 254) In Q 40:78, God states that the stories of only some prophets have been revealed to Muhammad and are mentioned in the Quran:

> We sent messengers before you, some of whose stories we told you and some of whose stories we did not tell you. It is not permitted for any messenger to bring a sign without the permission of God. When the word of God comes the matter is settled in truth, and those who relied on falsehood will then lose.

Q 2:247, for example, mentions an unnamed prophet which Muslim exegetes identify as the biblical Samuel who announced the kingship of Saul (Tālūt) to the Israelites. Q 36:13–29 refers to the "Companions of the City" (*asḥāb al-qaryah*), three messengers who were sent to an unnamed city. According to the passage, only one person from the city believed in the messengers while the rest were destroyed by a divine scream. The prolific tenth-century historian and Quran exegete Abū Jaʿfar b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) provides two interpretations. Some exegetes say that the three messengers were sent to the city of Antioch in the time of the Seleucids, and others maintain that the three messengers were disciples of Jesus sent to Antioch.

The Quran contains a number of passages listing the names of prophets. Q 2:136 and 3:84 enjoins belief in what God revealed to seven named prophets:

> Say: "We believe in God, what was revealed to us, what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Tribes (*al-asbāṭ*), what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to the prophets from their LORD without making any distinction among any of them. We submit (*muslimūn*) to Him."

Q 4:163 includes a more expanded list of twelve prophets, partially overlapping this list with the exception of the exclusion of Moses:

> We revealed to you, like what we revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Tribes, Jesus, Job (Ayyūb), Jonah (Yūnus), Aaron (Hārūn), and Solomon. We gave David the Psalms (Zabūr).

Some of the same prophets are mentioned in a polemical context in Q 2:140 asserting that Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, and the Tribes were neither Jews nor Christians.

A shorter list of four prophets with whom Muhammad is grouped are said to be classed as "those who are strong-willed" (*ūlū al-ʿaẓm*) in Q 46:35. Some Muslim exegetes refer to these five as "arch-prophets," who, unlike other prophets, brought entirely new sets of laws from God (Majlisī 11:32). The same four are mentioned as a group in Q 42:13 and Q 33:7. Although the use of the terms is not consistent in the Quran, later Muslim scholars categorize "messengers" (*rasūl*, pl. *rusul*) as a smaller group within the larger collection of "prophets" (*anbīyāʾ*, *nabīyin*). A "messenger" (*rasūl*) is distinguished from other prophets on account of his bringing a revealed scripture or "book" (*kitāb*) to his people rather than a more simple unwritten message.

(p. 255) Another special grouping of six prophets is called "chosen" (*al-akhyār*) in Q 38:45–48:

> 45 Remember our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, having power and vision.
> 46 We chose them for the purpose of remembrance of the abode (of the hereafter).
> 47 They are, according to us, among those who are pure in being chosen.
>
> 48 Mention Ishmael, Elisha and Dhū al-Kifl, all of who are among the chosen.

Ishmael is grouped together with Dhū al-Kifl again and with Idris (Enoch) in Q 21:85 as being "steadfast" (*ṣābirīn*) and "upright" (*ṣāliḥīn*), and with Elisha again along with Jonah and Lot in Q 68:48 as "more virtuous than the worlds" (*faḍal-nā ʿalā al-ʿālamīn*).

The prophets Noah, Hud, and Ṣāliḥ are often grouped together because of the parallels in language and structure of their stories narrated back to back in several chapters of the Quran, including Q 7, Q 11, and Q 26. There is a long ḥadīth report in which Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 652), one of the first people to convert to Islam, asks the prophet Muhammad about the number of prophets and the books sent with them. The prophet Muhammad groups together chronologically the first eight prophets into two categories: "four were Syrian: Adam, Seth, Noah, and Enoch … Four were Arab: Hūd, Ṣaliḥ, Shuʿayb, and Muhammad."

Muslim exegetes designate as "Israelite prophets" the line of prophets descending from Isaac and culminating in Jesus, including all the biblical prophets mentioned by name in the Quran in addition to others identified in Quranic passages where there is no prophet named. A report given on the authority of the widely cited ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās (d. ca. 687), a cousin of the prophet Muhammad, claims "all of the prophets are Israelites except ten: Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Hud, Salih, Shuayb, Abraham, Ishmael and Muhammad."

The relationships among the prophets is usually represented as a tree, its main trunk grounded in Adam, Idris, and Noah, branching off after Abraham from Isaac through all the Israelite prophets to Jesus, and from Ishmael directly to the prophet Muhammad. Shuʾayb is considered a descendant of Abraham through his son Midian. The prophets Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Lot branch off from the main trunk before Abraham.

This genealogical rendering of the prophets is not unlike the lineage of Jesus given in the gospels (Matt 1:1–17; Lk 3:23–38). In his commentary on Q 7:157 and Q 61:6, Ibn Kathīr (Ibn Kathīr n.d.) refers to Jesus as the "seal" of the Israelite prophets. Muslim stories of the prophets and the conception of Muhammad, parallel to the Israelite prophets, issuing from Adam, Noah, and Abraham, constitute an Islamic version of "salvation history" familiar in Christian theology.

In five places, the Quran (Q 2:136, 2:140, 3:84, 4:163, 7:160) refers to the *asbāṭ*, usually understood and translated as the "tribes" and identified with the twelve sons of Israel and the Israelite tribes (Ibn Kathīr on Q 2:136). Cognate with the Hebrew (s*hevet*), the plural term *asbāṭ* is commonly explained by Muslim exegesis as derived from the word for a tree (*sabaṭ*) and that the descendants of Isaac are like the branches of this tree (p. 256) (*Qurṭubī* on Q 2:136). According to Muslim exegetes, the tribes descended from Ishmael, also twelve in number, are designated by the more common Arabic word for "tribes" (*qabā'il*). The concept of the twelve tribes being prophets, listed alongside the other biblical prophets, is not fully explained by Muslim exegesis. In Q 32:24 God says he made some of the Israelites "leaders" (*a'immah*), rightly guiding them with his word when they were steadfast and believing his signs. Q 7:159 mentions a community among the "people of Moses" who rightly guide with truth and establish justice, and Q 3:113–114 refers to a community from among the "People of the Book" which is among the upright.

Q 33:40 calls Muhammad the "seal of prophets," a term not found anywhere else in the Quran:

> Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the apostle of God (*rasūl al-lāh*) and seal of the prophets (*khātim al-nabīyin*). God is Knowing of everything.

Many Muslim exegetes explain that the appellation "seal of the prophets" means Muhammad was the culmination and conclusion of prophethood, of all the previous prophets beginning with Adam (Friedman 1986, 177–215). The term is found in quotations and summaries of Manichaean texts in which Mani is said to be the last and universal prophet sent following Buddha to India, Zoroaster to Iran, and Jesus to the West (Stroumsa 1986, 61–63). The idea that prophets have been sent to all the peoples of the earth is found in Q 16:36.

> We sent to every people (*ummah*) a messenger: "Worship God and avoid tyranny!" Among them were those God guided, and among them were those upon whom misguidance has been decreed. Travel in the earth and see how those who deny were punished.

Muslim exegetes identify Muhammad with the "gentile" (*al-ummī*) prophet mentioned in Q 7:157–158.

> 7:157 Those who follow the messenger, the gentile prophet about whom they find things written in their Torah and Gospel. He commands them to separate themselves from what is reprehensible. He commands the right and forbids the wrong.

> He releases them from their burdens and yokes which are upon them. Those who believe in him, they are the ones who will prosper. 158 Say: “People, I am sent to you as a messenger of God, to whom belongs dominion over the heavens and the earth. There is no god other than he. He causes to live and causes to die, so believe in God and his messenger, the gentile prophet who believes in God, his commands, and follow him so that you might be rightly guided.

The Prophet Muhammad, like Mani in Manichaean texts and Jesus in Christianity, is considered to be a universal prophet sent not only to one people but to all people for all time.

(p. 257) In addition to the twenty-five prophets mentioned by name in the Quran and listing Lot as one of the prophets, some Shiʿī scholars include the following names of prophets: Joshua son of Nun, Iramya, Kharkeel (or Ḥarqīl), Ismail b. Kharkeel, Isaiah, Samuel, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Daniel, Isaiah, and George. Nonbiblical prophets include Kharqīl and his son and St. George. Kharqīl (called Ḥizqīl or “Ezekiel” in non-Shiʿī Muslim exegesis) and his son Ishmael are connected to the Muslim exegesis of Q 40:23–46, which identifies him with the only “one who believed” from among the Egyptians when Moses was sent to the Pharaoh. The name George refers to the Christian saint, the shrines of which are sometimes visited by Muslims venerating the Islamic prophet al-Khiḍr. Of the Twelve Prophets, only Habakkuk, other than Jonah, is listed, alongside the other biblical prophets Daniel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.

Another list in the seventeenth-century Shiʿī encyclopedia *Biḥār al-anwār* (98:401, 11:59) includes different names: Seth, Idris, Noah, Hud, Salih, Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, Tribes (al-Asbāṭ), Lot, Shuayb, Job, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Manessah (Mīshā), Khidr, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Jonah, Elijah, Elisha, Dhū al-Kifl, Saul, David, Solomon, Zechariah, Isaiah, John, Tūrakh, Matthew, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezra, Jesus, Simon, George, disciples, the followers (apostles), Khālid, Ḥinẓalah, and Luqmān. For the most part the list is chronological, beginning with the sons of Adam through Zechariah and John. The insertion of Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezra between John and Jesus might reflect the association of these prophets with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the identification of Nebuchadnezzar with the persecution of Israelite prophets.

Jonah

Of all the Twelve Prophets, only Jonah (Yūnus) is well-known in Islam. The Quran mentions Jonah four times by name (Q 4:163, 6:86, 10:98, 37:139). Two of these references only include the name in a list of other prophets:

> Q 4:163. We revealed to you just as we revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Tribes, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon. We gave David the Psalms.

> Q 6:84. We gave to him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, all we guided. Noah we guided before, and among his descendants are David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron. Like this we reward those who do good.
>
> 85 Zechariah, John, Jesus, and Elijah, all were among the upright. 86 Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot, all we favored above the worlds.

Muslim exegetes point out that other such lists of the names of prophets occur in the Quran, but it is only in these two passages that Jonah is mentioned alongside other (p. 258) prophets. A number of Muslim sources report that the prophet Muhammad said Jonah was the best worshipper or the most virtuous of the prophets. In one report it is related that a Muslim struck the face of a Jew who said that "Moses is the one chosen above the worlds," contradicting the use of the epithet to Jonah in Q 6:86. In another report Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ relates that the prophet Muhammad said that God will always respond when Muslims use the invocation used by Jonah.

The name "Jonah" is usually used as the title for the tenth chapter of the Quran (Q 10), although Jonah himself and a brief reference to his prophetic mission only appear in verse 98:

> If there had been a city which believed, its faith would have brought a benefit, except the community of Jonah. When they believed we removed from it the punishment of disgrace in the life of this world, and allowed them to enjoy themselves for a while.

In his commentary on this verse, Ibn Kathīr cites a number of early Muslims who agree that the city mentioned is Nineveh "in the land of Mosul" and that Jonah had been sent to the city as a prophet. Jonah summoned the people to God, but the people rejected Jonah and persisted in their unbelief until Jonah finally left and invoked a severe punishment upon the city.

Muslim exegetes add that after Jonah had left and invoked the punishment upon the city, the people repented and regretted that they had rejected Jonah. They put on sackcloth and removed all the young female animals from their flocks. When God raged against them, they all cried for help and prayed to God, even the sheep, camels, cows, and riding and pack animals. Because of this God removed the punishment from them. The idea that even the animals prayed for forgiveness might reflect a motif found in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Gittin 55a, see Heller and Rippin 1954). The day God granted forgiveness, according to some exegetes, was ʿĀshūrāʿ, the tenth of Muḥarram, also known as the "day of atonement," the day on which Muslims commemorate the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, the son of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. According to the otherwise unknown scholar al-Kisāʾī, to whom is attributed a collection of stories of the prophets, Jonah was also conceived on ʿĀshūrāʾ, the same date on which he later received God's forgiveness (Thackston 1978, 350).

The longest and most detailed version of Jonah's story is found in Q 37:139–148:

> 37:139. Jonah was one of the messengers. 140 When he ran away to the ship, fully loaded, 141 he cast lots and was one of those who are refuted. 142 The fish swallowed him. He was blameworthy. 143 Were it not that he was one of those who glorified God, 144 he would have lingered in its belly until the Day of Calling Forth. 145 We cast him, naked, and he was sick. 146 We caused to grow over him a tree which spread. 147 We sent him to 100,000 or more, 148 and they believed. So we allowed them to enjoy themselves for a while.

(p. 259) The tree mentioned in verse 146 is found in Jonah 4:5–10, and Muslim exegetes explain that this was a special tree with extra-soft leaves, providing much shade. According to Ibn Kathir, Jonah could eat the fruit from the tree all day long and gain great mental and physical stamina from it without having to remove the husks or the seeds, without the need for any preparation or cooking. There are different opinions regarding the number of people to whom Jonah was sent mentioned in verse 147, ranging from 110,000 to 170,000, perhaps reflecting acknowledgment of the apparent discrepancy between Q 37:147 and Jonah 4:11, which puts the number at “more than 120,000” people.

Q 21:87–88 refers to Jonah as “He of the fish” (*dhū al-nūn*), and Q 68:48–50 uses the term “Companion of the fish” (*ṣāḥib al-ḥūt*). Some Muslim exegetes maintain that these epithets designate different prophets, but most interpret them as references to the story of Jonah being swallowed by a fish.

> 21:87. He of the fish (*dhū al-nūn*) when he left angry, thinking that we had no power over him. He called out from the depths of darkness: “There is no god other than you, glory be to you. I was one of those who do wrong.” 88 We answered him and saved him from affliction. Thus do we save the believers.

> Q 68:48. Be patient for the decision of your LORD. Do not be like the Companion of the fish (*ṣāḥib al-ḥūt*), calling out when he was distressed. 49 Kindness from his LORD came to him so that he might be spit out naked while he was worthy of blame. 50 His LORD responded to him and made him one of the upright.

Because Jonah is described as calling upon God only when he was distressed, Muslim exegetes do not consider Jonah among the highest ranks of prophets, called “those of determination (*ūlū al-ʿazm*)” in Q 46:35. In his commentary on Q 68:48–50, Ibn Kathīr claims that it was because of Jonah’s praising of God, repentance, and turning toward God that he was saved from the belly of the fish; otherwise he would have lingered there until the Day of Resurrection.

A longer and fuller version of Jonah’s mission, paralleling the biblical account, is found in Muslim exegesis on these Quran passages. He is said to have ridden on a ship and have been thrown overboard after lots were cast three times among the passengers to determine the cause of the storm. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish sent by God. The fish is commanded by God not to bite Jonah or digest him, and this fish is then swallowed by another larger fish. According to Sālim b. Abī al-Jaʿd al-Ashjaʿī (d. ca. 722), the phrase “depths of darkness” in Q 21:87 refers to the one fish being swallowed by another in the

darkness of the sea depths. Other exegetes add that there was also the darkness of the night, and the length of time Jonah was in the belly of the fish varies from one to forty days. The fish is said to have circled all around the seas until Jonah called out to God, and then Jonah is spit out onto the beach. Relating opinions about Jonah's condition when he was spit onto the beach, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Masʿūd, who said Jonah was like a chicken without feathers, and Ibn ʿAbbās, al-Suddī, and Ibn Zayd, who said he was like a child when it is just born and has nothing.

(p. 260) It is reported, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (d. 681), one of the early followers of the prophet Muhammad from whom a large number of ḥadīth reports are transmitted, that the prophet Muhammad said the following about Jonah:

> When God wanted to imprison Jonah in the belly of the fish, he revealed to the fish: "Take him but do not eat him as food nor chew him." When the fish had taken him to the bottom of the sea, Jonah heard whispering. He said to himself: "What is this?" God revealed to him in the belly of the fish: "That is the beasts of the sea praising." So he praised God while he was in the belly of the fish. The angels heard him praising and said: "Our LORD, we hear a weak sound in the earth." God said: "That is my servant Jonah. He disobeyed me so I imprisoned him in the belly of a fish in the sea." They said: "The upright servant, the one who lifted up to you, every day and night, upright deeds?" God said: "Yes." Thus they interceded on his behalf, and God ordered the fish to spit him on the beach.

A similar story is related on the authority of Anas b. Mālik, a companion and servant of the prophet Muhammad. In his version, Jonah prays the words given in Q 21:87 and God releases him because the angels argued that his past good deeds should earn him God's mercy. Most Muslim scholarship explains that Jonah was the "son of Mattai," but some scholars claim that the name was not of his father but designated his people. Al-Thaʿalabī claims that "Mattai" was the name of the mother of Jonas, and that Jonas and Jesus are the only two prophets named after their mother. The fifteenth-century scholar Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1449) said that Jonah lived during the "small kingdoms of the Persians," perhaps reflecting the idea that the biblical book of Jonah was written during the Achaemenid period. The eleventh-century scholar Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿalabī (d. 1036) in his *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, a collection of stories of the prophets, placed the life of Jonah near the end of his collection after the stories of Jesus. In his stories of the prophets, al-Kisāʾī claims that Jonah was born when his father was an old man and that his widowed mother was able to feed him with nothing other than a miraculous wooden spoon. He is said to have married the daughter of Zechariah the father of John the Baptist and is thus regarded as his sister (Thackston 1978).

Twelve Prophets in the Quran and Muslim Exegesis

Several of the Twelve Prophets are only mentioned in connection with the stories of other prophets or acknowledged as Israelite prophets otherwise unknown from the Quran and its direct exegesis.

According to a number of Muslim sources, it was the Israelite prophet Habakkuk who fed the prophet Daniel when he was thrown into the pit with the lion by (p. 261) Nebuchadnezzar. The *Biḥār al-anwār* (14:367–368) explains that other Israelite prophets such as Ezra were held in Babylon alongside Daniel. Other sources, including the commentary of Ibn al-Jawzī, record traditions about the other companions of Daniel.

In his collection of stories of the prophets, al-Thaʿalabī states in his section on the stories related to Nebuchadnezzar that "Habakkuk is mentioned in the Torah. It is said that he was 200 years before Christ." He also makes a similar passing comment about Isaiah, relating him to the prophet Amos. Al-Thaʿalabī states that it says in the Torah that Isaiah was "the son of Amos (*Amūṣ*) and that Amos was the brother of Amṣīyā the king of the Jews" 700 years before Christ.

Some Muslim exegetes and modern scholars claim that the Quranic prophet Dhū al-Kifl, more commonly associated with Ezekiel, is Obadiah. In Q 6:86 Dhū al-Kifl is mentioned along with Jonah. The name itself "He of the Portion" (*kifl*) could be taken as a reference to the story in 1 Kgs 18 where Obadiah feeds the prophets of Yahweh in hiding (Geiger 1898, 155; Stanton 1919, 161–163).

The Quran mentions the name Zechariah (Zakarīyā) in 19:7, where he is clearly identified as the father of John the Baptist.

Zechariah, we bring you the good news of a boy whose name is John (Yaḥyā'). We have not given this name to anyone before him.

Muslim exegetes add a number of details to the narrative in the Quran that conflate this Zechariah father of John with the Zechariah known from the Twelve Prophets. In Lk 11:50–51, Jesus recalls the blood of Zechariah. In the Gospel of Matt 23:35, Jesus calls him Zechariah "son of Berechiah," identifying him with the name of the prophet to whom the prophetic book of Zechariah (1:1) is attributed (Allison 2000 on Lk 11:49–51; MacPherson 1897). Ibn ʿAsākir recounts a story, also found in the Babylonian Talmud and in the Midrash Rabbah on Lamentations (b. Sanhedrin 69b; Giṭtin 57b; Lamentations Rabbah 4:13), about how the blood of the martyred Zechariah continued to boil in the temple until the general of Nebuchadnezzar invoked his name and threatened to exterminate all of Israel. Other Muslim scholars, like earlier Christian texts such as the *Protoevangelium of James* (chap. 24) and the Gospels commentary of the Syrian father Ephrem, describe the martyrdom of Zechariah the father of John in terms recalling those of

Zechariah, son of the high priest Jehoiada, comparing the persecution of Jehoash king of Judah (2 Chr 24:20–21) with King Herod (Beck 1961, 67.2–10; Shepardson 2008, 59).

The prophet Zechariah is also connected in Muslim sources with the exegesis of passages in the Quran accusing the Israelites and Jews of having killed their own prophets. Nine passages in the Quran repeat this accusation (Q 2:261, 2:87, 2:91, 3:21, 3:112, 3:181, 3:183, 4:155, 5:70):

> 2:91 When it was said to them: "Believe in what God has revealed" and they said: "We believe (only) in what was revealed to us," and they disbelieve in what came after it, although it is the truth confirming that which they have in their own hands, then say: "Why did you kill the prophets of God if you were believers?"

(p. 262) In his commentary on Q 2:91, Ibn Kathīr explains that the Jews rejected Muhammad just as they had rejected and killed the earlier prophets sent to them by God: God revealed the Torah to the Israelites, and the Torah confirms the truth of the Quran revealed to the prophet Muhammad, but the Jews rejected Muhammad and refused to acknowledge that the Torah foretold his coming. This theme of the Jews "killing the prophets" (Reynolds 2012) recalls the biblical accounts of Zechariah and the killing of the prophets of Yahweh by Israelite kings (1 Kgs 18:4, 19:9–10), a theme already present in Neh 9:26 and Heb 11:37. Muslim exegetes also describe the martryrdom of Zechariah in terms paralleling those of Isaiah in Jewish and Christian legends—Ibn al-Athīr (1:120) and al-Thaʿlabī (341–342) say he was sawed in half while hiding in a tree from his pursuers (Blank 1937–1938). Hellenistic and late antique texts, such as the *Martrydom of Isaiah* and the *Lives of the Prophets*, along with early Christian exegesis (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 120:5, and Tertullian, *De patientia* 14), describe the same fate for Isaiah expanding on the narrative in 1 Kgs 18–21. The twelfth-century Christian history known as the *Book of the Bee* (chap. 32) lists Habakkuk as being stoned to death by the Jews in Jerusalem, Amos being beaten to death by Ahaziah, and Isaiah sawn in half by Manasseh (Satran 1995). Another tradition found in classical Muslim exegesis, such as that of Ibn Kathīr on Q 2:61, relates that the Israelites killed three hundred prophets in one day.

Twelve Prophets in Muslim Bible Exegesis

Muslim scholars know that Jewish and Christian Bibles contained books attributed to the Twelve Prophets. In his *Book of Creation and History* (Kitāb al-badʾ wa al-taʾrīkh), the tenth-century CE Iranian scholar Abū Naṣr Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqadisī (d. ca. 966) refers to a book of scripture (*sifr*) authored by twelve prophets all living around the same time. He claims that a Jew gave him the names of the prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (cited in Adang 1996, 129–130). This list of only eleven names omits Jonah without explanation. The author was probably originally from Jerusalem, but the book was written in Sijistān (modern eastern Iran and southern Afghanistan), where the author may have come into contact with Jews belonging to the Babylonian community under the Exilarch. He is also known to have traveled to Bethlehem, Cairo, cities in Upper Egypt, and cities in Iraq like

Baṣrah where he reports having spoken to a Jewish scholar (Miquel 1967; Adang 1996, 48–49).

Other Muslim scholars quote passages from the Twelve Prophets, usually with the aim of demonstrating that the Bible foretells the coming of Islam and the prophet Muhammad. The most commonly cited passages are Hos 9:5–6, 13:4–5; Mic 4:1–2; Hab 3:3–6, 8–13; Zeph 3:8–10; and Zech 14:9–20 (Adang 1996, 264–266). In his anti-Jewish pamphlet, the fourteenth-century Moroccan Jewish convert to Islam ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq (p. 263) al-Islāmī, (Perlmann 1940–1941) makes a phonetic transcription of Hos 9:5–6, vocalizing the Hebrew word *maḥmad* to be the name "Muḥammad" (Lazarus-Yafeh 1992, 125). Elsewhere ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq claims that Ezra (ʿUzayr) is the author of Mal 3:1 (Lazarus-Yafeh 1992, 72). Abū Naṣr al-Maqdisī quotes Zech 3:7 (although he claims to be quoting from the book of Joshua) as proof of his assertion that some Jews believe the inhabitants of heaven will become angels after a millennium (Maqdisī 1:199; Adang 1996, 128). He also claims that he derived Jewish conceptions of Gog and Magog from the book of Zechariah, although he combines Zech 14:2 with additions from Ezekiel (Maqdisī 2:207; Adang 1996, 129).

Shiʿī sources preserve a conversation between the eighth Imam ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d. 818), an anonymous Christian priest employed by the caliph Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Maʿmūn (r. 813–833), and the Exilarch (Raʿs al-Jālūt) of the Babylonian Jewish community. The Imam challenges them to acknowledge that the Bible refers to the coming of Islam and Muhammad:

> The Imam addressed the Exilarch: "It is mentioned in the book of Isaiah that he said: 'O my people! I saw a rider on a mule. He was clothed in garments of light and I saw a rider on a camel. His light and luminescence was like a bright moon.' Both the priest and the Exilarch admitted that it was true."
>
> The Imam said that Isaiah has mentioned in Torah that he saw two riders and their splendor shall illuminate the whole world. One of them shall ride a tall mule and one shall ride a camel. "Who are the two personalities mentioned by Isaiah?," asked the Imam. The Exilarch admitted ignorance and appealed to the Imam to enlighten him.
>
> The Imam said, "The person on the mule refers to Jesus and rider on the horse indicates Muhammad. Do you reject this saying of Torah?" "No! we cannot reject this," they both said.
>
> Then the Imam asked "Do you know about the prophet Habakkuk?" "Yes," they replied, "we know about him." The Imam asked: "Have you not read the verse where he says 'The truth became manifest from Mount Paran and the skies filled with the praise of God. His people and his riders shall battle in the seas and in the deserts too. He shall bring a new book from God after the destruction of Jerusalem.' 'The Book' means the Qur'an. Are you aware of these words? Do you have faith in these words?"

> The Exilarch said: “These are the words of Habakkuk, we certainly believe in his words.” (Majlisī 10:208, 14:163, see 46:176).

Elsewhere in the encyclopedic Shiʿī *Biḥār al-anwār*, a compendium of traditions related to the Imams attributed to the Safavid scholar Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1699), one of the Imams quotes Hab 3:3 (Majlisī 15:108) and also attributes it to Daniel as well (Majlisi 15:109). In other places there are quotes from Obadiah (Majlisi 15:231) and mention of the names Obadiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah before quoting from the Psalms of David (Majlisi 15:231).The *Dalāʾil al-nubūwah* of Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutaybah (d. 889) preserved in later authors, particularly the (p. 264) *Kitāb al-wafā fī faḍāʾil al-muṣṭafā* of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), cites the same passage from Habakkuk (Ḥusseini 1950; Lecomte 1965).

> Ibn Qutaybah said: Among the words of Habakkuk, who prophesied in the days of Daniel, Habakkuk says: “God came from Teman, and the holy one from the mountains of Paran, and the earth was filled with the praise and sanctification of the praiseworthy one (*aḥmad*), and with his right hand he exercised power over the earth and the necks of the nations” (Hab 3:3–4). He (Ibn Qutaybah) said: Habakkuk said: “The earth shines with his light, and his horses launched into the sea” (Hab 3:4, 15). Someone from the People of the Book furthermore informed me that it is said in the sayings of Habakkuk: “You shall be exceedingly filled in your bows, and the arrows shall be drenched at your command, oh praised one (Muhammad).” Now this is a clear statement of his name and his characteristics, and if they claim that it is not our prophet—for there is no denying their misrepresentation—who, then, is this praiseworthy one (*Aḥmad*) with whose praises the earth is filled, and who came from the mountains of Paran to exercise power over the earth and over the necks of nations? (Ibn Qutaybah’s *Dalāʾil al-nubūwah* quoted in the *Wafāʾ* of Ibn al-Jawzī cited in Adang 1996, 269–270).

It is important to note that Ibn Qutaybah claims to have heard this passage from other Jews and Christians, and that he specifically refutes their interpretation of the passage by linking it to Muhammad and the coming of Islam.

Not unlike Christian interpretation of select passages in the Old Testament as references to Jesus, Muslim scholars more widely identify certain Bible verses as foretelling Muhammad, the Quran, and Islam. Not infrequently, the verses from the Twelve Prophets drawn upon by Muslims as prophecies of Islam are the same ones used by Christians to foreshadow Jesus. For example, in his *Religion and State* (al-Dīn wa al-dawlah) ʿAlī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī, a former Nestorian Christian convert to Islam, cites selections from Hab 3:3–13 and argues against the Jewish and Christian interpretation of the verses.

This brilliant and portentous prophecy in which there is no doubt or dispute has articulated the truth, disclosed what is hidden, removed the coverings and dispelled uncertainties. God has named the prophet twice by name and declared that doom goes before him and birds of prey accompany his banners, that he will ride horses and bring forth resolution, and that at his word arrows are drenched in blood. He is the one for whom the sun and

the moon stood still in their courses and the soldiers advanced in the glint of his arrows and in the flashing of his lances. If it is not him we have described, then who is it? Perhaps it is the bound and captive people of Israel, or the submissive, unresisting Christians? How can this be when he has named the prophet two times in it and described his armies and his wars, and how he will trample the nations and conquer them in anger and punishment? So my cousins, put aside stubbornness and contentiousness, drink down the bitter truth, get over your intoxication and understand God almighty and his pious, good prophets. (Ṭabarī 1923, 395–397; Bouyges 1949; Meyerhoff 1931).

(p. 265) In another place Ibn Rabbān quotes from Zeph 3:8–10 and argues that the verses refer not to the spread of Christianity but Islam:

> This is Zephaniah who spoke in revelation and declared similar things from God to that which his companions brought. He described the community that witnesses that there is no god but God, alone with nothing associated with him, that comes together in his worship, brings him sacrifices from the coasts of Sudan and the places where the rivers cross. The chosen language is the clear Arabic tongue which is not barbaric, showy, or sophistical. It is this that has spread among the nations, and thus they have spoken with it, and been renewed by the renewal for them in it. Hebrew was the language of these prophets, and Syriac never spread beyond the land of Syria. Likewise, Greek (Rūmīyah) did not spread beyond Rome, nor Persian spread beyond the state of Iranshahr, while Arabic has appeared as far as the dust settles, the deserts of the Turks and the countries of the Khazars and India. (Ṭabarī 1923, 398–399; Lazarus-Yafeh 1992, 94)

Ibn Rabbān also quotes Mic 4:1–2, asserting that it contains a description of Mecca and argues that it cannot refer to Jerusalem because Jerusalem was already in existence at the time Micah lived and he would not have prophesied about something that had already happened in the past (Ṭabarī 1923, 394–395). Zechariah 14:9 is interpreted to prove that only Islam is responsible for promoting the unity of the one God (Ṭabarī 1923, 398–401) and in his exegesis of Hos 13:5, Ibn Rabbān refutes the Christian claim that the verse refers to John the Baptist; it refers instead to the prophet Muhammad, whom God raised up and tended in the bleak waste and desolate desert.

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The Minor Prophets and the Book of the Twelve in Late Eighteenth-Century through Early Twenty-First-Century Research

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay traces and analyzes modern-critical scholarship on the Minor Prophets or Book of the Twelve Prophets from the late eighteenth century through the early twenty-first century. It differentiates between the Christian practice from the time of Jerome and Theodore of Mopsuestia that treated the Twelve as twelve individual Minor Prophets that were collected together and the Jewish practice of reading the Twelve as the Book of the Twelve Prophets. Early treatment of the Minor Prophets focuses especially on the early work of J. G. Eichhorn (1780–1783), W. M. L. de Wette (1817), F. Hitzig (1838), H. Ewald (1840–1841), and B. Duhm (1875, 1922). More modern treatment of the Book of the Twelve Prophets focuses especially on the work of K. Budde (1922), R. E. Wolfe (1935), D. Schneider (1979), O. H. Steck (1991, 1999), James D. Nogalski (1993, 2011), Jakob Wöhrle (2006, 2008), and the author (Sweeney 2000).

Keywords: Minor Prophets, Twelve Prophets, Eichhorn, Ewald, Hitzig, Duhm, Nogalski, Wöhrle, Sweeney

STUDY of the Minor Prophets or the Book of the Twelve Prophets has played a prominent role in the history of modern critical research on the Bible. Although overshadowed by early critical work on the Pentateuch and the Book of Isaiah, study of the Minor Prophets was important to the development of modern historical-critical scholarship. Because most scholars in this period were Protestant Christians, research on the Minor Prophets focused especially on the individual books of the Minor Prophets as discrete compositions in keeping with the views of Jerome and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Although the Twelve Prophets were one book, Jerome noted in his Prologue to the Dodekapropheton that each of the Twelve had their own properties, and Christianity followed by reading the Twelve as individual prophets, collectively known as the Minor Prophets. Judaism, on the other hand, read the Twelve as a single book comprised of twelve components, and it was only in the twentieth century and beyond as modern scholars began to pay increasing atten-

tion to the redactional and literary characteristics of the prophetic literature of the Bible that serious study of the Book of the Twelve Prophets began to emerge.

Both aspects of the Twelve Prophets, the individual characters and forms of the Minor Prophets and the collective character of the Book of the Twelve Prophets, play key roles (p. 268) in contemporary research on the Hebrew Bible. This essay therefore traces the development of research on the individual books of the Minor Prophets from the late eighteenth century through the present followed by the development of research on the Book of the Twelve Prophets from the early twentieth century through the present day. An understanding of both dimensions is necessary for future work on the interpretation of the Book of the Twelve Prophets and their twelve constituent Minor Prophets.

The Minor Prophets

The varied orders of the Twelve Prophets in the Greek and other Versions of the Bible read in Christianity and Jerome's Prologue to his commentary on the Dodekapropheton prompted Christian interpreters to read the Twelve Prophets as twelve individual prophetic works that were collected together as one. The earliest Greek manuscripts of the Bible, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, read the order of the Twelve as Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, although later Greek manuscripts display great variety in the order of the Twelve. Such variety signaled to Christian interpreters from late antiquity on that the Twelve Prophets were individual books that were shorter than the larger prophetic works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and so they would be read as the twelve individual books of the Minor Prophets.

Jerome's understanding of the Twelve as individual prophetic books markedly influenced Christian interpretation of the Twelve Prophets from late antiquity through modern times. For this reason, at the outset of modern critical scholarship in the late eighteenth century, modern critical interpreters (almost entirely Protestant Christians) treated the Twelve Prophets as individual prophetic books, each with its own historical background.

Discussion of the emerging modern study of the Minor Prophets best begins with Johann Gottfried Eichhorn's (1752–1827) *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, a three-volume work first published in Leipzig in 1780–1783 which expanded to five volumes in later editions. Eichhorn's introduction was one of the earliest comprehensive presentations of the emerging influence of the Enlightenment period during the eighteenth century in which historical critical work began to emerge. Eichhorn's work proved to be highly influential, and so his *Einleitung* was revised and republished repeatedly during his lifetime and beyond. His work was motivated by the growing interest of the time in ascertaining the earliest historical forms of the biblical books. Although he did not subscribe to the emerging source theory of the Pentateuch in his day, he treated the Pentateuch historically. He continued to view Moses as the author of the Pentateuch and therefore viewed the Pentateuch as the foundation for the rest of the Bible. His discussion of the canonical order of the Minor Prophets is brief and appears in relation to his treatment of Isaiah (Eichhorn

1823–1824, 4:120–121). Following the lead of Jerome, he simply presents the books according to the order of the Hebrew Masoretic Version and (p. 269) discusses the contents, theological perspectives, and historical character of each. In general, he presents a relatively traditional understanding of the historical setting of the Twelve.

Eichhorn's treatment of Hosea places the prophet in the reign of King Jeroboam II of northern Israel, which he dates to 823–783 BCE, as well as the reigns of the Judean kings Uzziah (809–758 BCE), Jotham (758–740 BCE), Ahaz (740–727 BCE), and Hezekiah (726–698 BCE) in keeping with the superscription of the book in Hos 1:1 (Eichhorn 1823–1824, 4:268–297). He maintains that the northern kingdom of Israel was very strong and wealthy during this period, although it suffered greatly from apostasy due to the tendency of the nation to follow foreign gods. He understands Hosea's condemnation of Israel to be based on the example of his own marital troubles with his wife, Gomer, whom YHWH commanded him to marry in Hos 1–3. The prophet's condemnations of the various dimensions of the people's infidelity to YHWH then follow in Hos 4–14.

Eichhorn sees Joel as a great prophet and poet from the southern kingdom of Judah, who portrayed threats against Jerusalem as a major locust plague. Eichorn has difficulties dating Joel, however. After surveying options to view Joel as a contemporary of Elijah and Elisha or Isaiah, he places him in 790 BCE in part because Joel 4:19 and Amos 1:9 display a common interest in Edom. Eichorn also notes how Joel influenced later works, such as Ezek 38, Zech 14:8, and the New Testament book of Revelation.

Eichhorn's treatment of Amos indicates that he is a shepherd from the Judean town of Tekoa, located in the hills overlooking the Dead Sea. Eichhorn places him in the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel but maintains that Hosea and Isaiah were later. Amos was a shepherd and agriculturalist, perhaps descended from the founding family of Tekoa, who stood up for common Judeans against kings who viewed them as little more than slaves. His interest in the House of David (Amos 9:11–15) is messianic and anticipates the coming of Christ.

Obadiah, according to Eichorn, is a late monarchic-period prophet who condemns Edom for its actions in desecrating the Jerusalem Temple during the Babylonian destruction of the city. Jeremiah's quotation of Obad 1–7 in Jer 49:7–22 (see esp. Jer 49:7, 9, and 14–16) indicates that Jeremiah had fragments of Obadiah's prophecies before him and employed them in writing his own oracle.

Eichhorn begins his discussion of Jonah by observing that 2 Kgs 14:25 places him in the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel. After noting the problems of the book of Jonah, particularly its credibility as a historical narrative, he discusses the various options for its interpretation, such as a folktale or a fable, before offering a new interpretation that it conveys poetic moral teaching concerning YHWH's grace to the nations that was written apart from the rest of the Minor Prophets at a much later time.

Based upon the notice of Micah's influence on Hezekiah in Jer 26:18, Eichhorn dates the prophet especially to the reign of Hezekiah, and he argues that Micah's oracles were directed entirely to Judah. A contemporary of Isaiah, he announced the impending destruction of Jerusalem and anticipated a new Davidic monarch out of Bethlehem.

Eichhorn has some difficulties in dating Nahum, insofar as the book refers to the early seventh-century Assyrian assaults against Egypt that saw the downfall of Thebes. He (p. 270) ultimately concludes that Nahum was a prophet from the time of Hezekiah who anticipated the downfall of Nineveh. Eichhorn dates Habakkuk to the Neo-Babylonian subjugation of Judah in the late seventh century. Although he maintains that the book views YHWH's imposition of the Babylonians as a punishment for Judean wrongdoing, it also anticipates deliverance by YHWH. Eichhorn reads Zephaniah as a condemnation of Judah following the failure of Josiah's reforms.

Placing Haggai in relation to the building of the Second Temple, Eichorn sees the prophet's oracle concerning Zerubbabel as a call for revolution that never materialized. He views Zechariah as a contemporary of Haggai who also supported the building of the Second Temple. Although the oracles in Zech 9–11 and 12–14 might be dated to later times, such as the conquest of the ancient Near East by Alexander the Great or the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Syrian empire, Eichhorn holds that these sections were nevertheless the product of Zechariah, who anticipated these scenarios in the distant future. He places Malachi in the period between the building of the Second Temple and the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, maintaining that the prophet identifies the problems that will be addressed in the reforms of the latter.

Subsequent work by Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht de Wette (1780–1849) was heavily influenced by Eichhorn. De Wette is especially well-known for his work in Pentateuchal criticism in which he established the thesis that Deuteronomy was separate from the earlier four books of the Pentateuch. In his *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel Alten und Neuen Testaments, I. Die Einleitung in das Alte Testament enthaltend* (1817, 1843), he repeats his theses that Deuteronomy was composed separately from the earlier four books of the Pentateuch and that it would have been the book of Torah discovered in the Jerusalem Temple at the outset of King Josiah's reforms.

De Wette's treatment of the Minor Prophets differs little from that of Eichhorn. He maintains that the Minor Prophets are arranged in a largely historical order in both the Masoretic and Septuagint versions of the Hebrew Bible. He dates Joel and Jonah to approximately 810 BCE, Amos to 790 BCE, Hosea to 785 BCE, Micah to 725 BCE, Nahum to 710 CE, Zephaniah 640 CE, Habakkuk to 605 CE, Obadiah to 570 CE, Haggai and Zechariah to 520 CE, and Malachi to 440 CE (de Wette, 1843, 2:436, a). He views Joel as an elder contemporary of Amos, and he follows Eichhorn in dating Jonah to the reign of Jeroboam II, although the narrative is the product of later legend reworked into a didactic composition. Nahum speaks after "the unsuccessful irruption of Sennacherib into Judah" (de Wette 1843, 2:460), and Zephaniah appears at the outset of Josiah's reforms to oppose

idolatry. Like Eichhorn, he maintains that Zech 9–11; 12–14 are predictions of future times.

The two-volume 1840–1841 survey of the Prophets by Eichhorn's student Georg Heinrich August Ewald (1803–1875), *Die Propheten des Alten Bunde*, took its lead from the teacher's work but introduced some important innovations. Julius Wellhausen, Ewald's student, blamed Ewald for delaying the spread of Pentateuchal source criticism as postulated by de Wette, Vatke, and Graf (Rogerson 1984, 91), and, indeed, the Pentateuch continued to serve its foundational role in Ewald's work. Rather than present the prophets in canonical order, however, as did Eichhorn and de Wette, Ewald treats (p. 271) them according to his view of their historical order, which at times differs little from earlier views. Joel remains a late ninth-century BCE Judean prophet who portrayed the threats posed to Jerusalem by enemy nations as locust hordes swarming against the city. Amos also remains a Judean prophet from Tekoa who spoke out against the moral corruption of northern Israel during the early eighth-century BCE reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. Hosea is a younger, northern prophet from the eighth century BCE who decries northern Israelite apostasy against YHWH based on the model of his own failed marriage with Gomer. Micah continues as a younger contemporary of Isaiah who like his senior colleague anticipates a messianic future when a righteous Davidic king would arise and the nations would flock to Zion. Nahum remains situated in the aftermath of the Assyrian conquest of Thebes, but he anticipates Nineveh's downfall. Zephaniah continues to speak during the reign of Josiah in anticipation of Assyria's downfall. Habakkuk continues to view Babylon's subjugation of Judah as divine punishment even as he anticipates YHWH's future deliverance of the nation. Obadiah continues to inhabit the exilic period to condemn Edom for its actions against Jerusalem.

Ewald's historical treatment of the prophet also yields results different from his predecessors. One surprise is treatment of Zech 9:1–11:17; 13:7–9, which he views as the work of an anonymous southern prophet who followed Hosea to denounce the northern Israelite ruling class and anticipate righteous rule. Another surprise is his conclusion that Zech 12:1–13:6; 14:1–21 is the work of another unknown prophet who spoke some fifteen years after Habakkuk about the messianic hope of Zion's redemption following its punishment. Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 continue to present their respective prophets' oracles concerning the construction of the Second Temple, although Zechariah is relieved from the burden of Zech 9–14. Malachi continues to address the problems of the period following the construction of the Second Temple. A final surprise appears in Ewald's treatment of Jonah which now appears as an example of late prophetic aftergrowth in the canon to address the issue of YHWH's mercy to the nations.

As the studies by Eichhorn, de Wette, and Ewald began to exert their influence on the field, two major commentaries on the Minor Prophets appeared during the mid-nineteenth century that illustrate the development of the field in relation to the historical character of the Minor Prophets. Ferdinand Hitzig (1807–1875), a student of Wilhelm Gesenius and later Heinrich Ewald, published the first edition of his commentary *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten* in 1838 (Hitzig 1838; 4th edition 1881). Described as an admirer

of positive criticism, he employs the tools of philology, history, and archaeology to solve critical problems in the text (Rogerson 1984, 134–136, esp. 134). He dates Joel earlier than other scholars to the period of the Aramean wars, ca. 870–865 BCE; Obadiah to the period after the destruction of Jerusalem from his standpoint in Egypt; Jonah to the Hellenistic period; and he views Zech 9–11 and 12–14 as the later work of two scribes identified as Second and Third Zechariah. Oxford Professor Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–1882) studied German theology for a period in Göttingen but proved to be a more conservative voice in pushing back against German rationalism. His commentary *The Minor Prophets with a Commentary*, first published in 1860, employs the traditional understanding that the Minor Prophets are presented according to their order in the (p. 272) canon as a primary means to date the individual books. He argues that Hosea, Amos, and Jonah were contemporaries; that Joel spoke in the early years of Hosea prior to Amos; that Obadiah was called about the same time as Joel; that Micah and Nahum were later than Jonah, followed by Habakkuk and Zephaniah (who quotes Habakkuk); and that Haggai, Zechariah (without distinguishing Zech 9–14 as the work of later hands), and Malachi were the latest (Pusey 1886, 1:10).

With the 1875 publication of Bernhard Duhm's *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion*, the beginnings of the modern consensus concerning the historical settings and sequence of the Minor Prophets becomes apparent (Duhm 1875; see also Seitz 2013; for a fuller historical treatment of the Prophets, including Trito-Isaiah, Deutero-Zechariah, and Trito-Zechariah, see Duhm 1922). Duhm (1847–1928), a student of Ewald and Wellhausen, would become especially well-known for his groundbreaking work on Isaiah and Jeremiah, but his early *Theologie der Propheten* laid the foundations for his later works. As the subtitle indicates, Duhm, in keeping with the views of his teacher, Wellhausen, is interested in examining the theology of the prophets as a basis for determining the inner developmental history of Israelite religion. To this end, he constructs a historical sequence of the prophets in relation to the various empires that invaded and subjugated Israel and Judah and thereby defined the major periods of Israelite and Judean history. He provides only a brief overview of prophecy from the time of Solomon's construction of the Temple to the time of Amos, largely because the prophets prior to Amos did not produce their own prophetic books and therefore do not constitute the so-called prophetic period in Duhm's thought. Amos is the first of the Assyrian-period prophets whose prophecies denouncing the northern kingdom of Israel give expression to his vision of humanity at large, including the worth of the individual as such, which is only possible in the moral universalism of Christianity (Duhm 1875, 115). Hosea follows Amos in his critique of northern Israel, but places his emphasis on the emotion of love expressed by G-d for the people as a basis for reconciliation following the apostasy of the people. Duhm follows Hosea with treatment of Zechariah ben Berechiah, the presumed author of Zech 9–11; 13:7–9, who presents a particularistic vision of YHWH's redemption of Israel, thereby revealing YHWH to the nations. Following treatment of Isaiah, Duhm turns to Micah, who straddles the interrelationship between threat and hope by illustrating the true service of G-d. Although Duhm places Jonah in the Assyrian period, he has little to say about the book. Duhm's treatment of the Chaldean or

Neo-Babylonian period focuses primarily on the revelation of Deuteronomistic law and the prophecies of Isaiah's successors, YHWH's world plan in Jeremiah, and the eschatological perspective of Ezekiel. He provides only brief treatment of Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk, although it is noteworthy that he presents them according to this historical order. He also notes Zech 12:1–13:6; 14 and Obadiah. His treatment of prophets in the Persian period gives pride of place to the universalism of Deutero-Isaiah, insofar as he had not yet developed his Trito-Isaiah hypothesis. He gives brief treatment to Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi (which he regards as a pseudonym) due to their particularistic theocratic perspectives. Altogether, Duhm focuses on those prophets who call for ethical (p. 273) and monotheistic viewpoints in keeping with the late nineteenth-century viewpoint as the basis for his understanding of the theology of the prophets. Duhm views the prophets as religious geniuses of their day, whose intellects enabled them to unite with the higher spirit that governs the development of the world and emerge as leaders of their people.

One further result of Duhm's work is the writing of commentary on the individual works of the Minor Prophets. He never produced a full commentary on the Minor Prophets as a whole, but he did produce a single volume commentary on Habakkuk (Duhm 1906). Nevertheless, commentaries on the entirety of the Minor Prophets would continue to be produced from the late nineteenth through much of the early twentieth century by Keil (1888), Wellhausen (1898), Marti (1904), van Hoonacker (1908), Nowack (1922), Sellin (1929–1930), and Rudolph (1966–1976), although all generally treated the Twelve as individual compositions. The same applies to commentaries on the Minor Prophets written by two or three scholars, such as Lippl, Theis, and Junker (1937–1938), Robinson and Horst (1938), Weiser and Elliger (1949), Stuart and R. Smith (1989, 1984), and Simundson and O'Brien (2005, 2004).

Throughout much of the following twentieth century and beyond, research on the Minor Prophets has proceeded largely at the level of the individual constituent books, even in commentaries devoted to all of the Minor Prophets (see the treatment of individual books within this volume). But throughout the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first, attention has increasingly turned to the Book of the Twelve Prophets.

The Book of the Twelve Prophets

Whereas Christian scholars tend to treat the Twelve Prophets as twelve individual compositions that had been assembled into a larger collection, Jewish scholars read the Twelve Prophets as a single book that had twelve constitutive elements. Such a reading strategy is already evident in ben Sira's second-century BCE reference to "the bones of the twelve prophets" (Sir 49:10), which suggests that he knew the twelve as a single book. The first-century CE Jewish historian Flavius Josephus considers the Twelve as one of the twenty-two books of the Bible (*Against Apion* 1:8), and 4 Ezra 14:41 considers the Twelve to be one of the twenty-four books of the Bible. The Babylonian Talmud lists the Twelve as the fourth book of the Latter Prophets following Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and it counts

the Twelve as one of the twenty-four books of the Bible at large *(b. Baba Batra 14b)*. The Talmud also stipulates that whereas biblical books generally have four blank lines to separate them from other books in manuscripts of the Bible, the Twelve should be written with a separation of only three lines to indicate their dual status as discrete books that form components of one larger Book of the Twelve Prophets (*b. Baba Batra* 13).

Given the Protestant character of early critical scholarship in the nineteenth century, attempts to understand the formation of the Book of the Twelve did not originate in an (p. 274) interest in Jewish readings of the book. They instead attempted to understand the process of the editorial collection of the twelve constituent books as a result of the historical evolution of the Bible. Ewald made an early attempt at such a reconstruction by pointing to three major stages: a first collection of early books including Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, and Zephaniah; a second postexilic stage that saw the addition of Obadiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, Haggai, and Zech 1–8; and a third stage from the time of Nehemiah that saw the addition of Zech 9–14 and Malachi (Ewald 1840–1841, 1:53–64). Similar attempts appeared in many of the major commentaries of the time, although they were largely historical and interested primarily in the collection of the books rather than in their interpretation as a whole.

A major shift in interest in the Book of the Twelve appears in the 1922 study of the Book of the Twelve by Karl Budde. Budde was motivated by his interest in the dual character of the twelve as both individual compositions and as a whole book. Insofar as the Twelve lacked the major narrative elements of the other prophetic books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, he argues that the Twelve were brought together to provide authoritative scripture in the fourth–third centuries BCE He explained the absence of narrative material as the result of an attempt analogous to the P material of the Pentateuch to eliminate the human elements of the Twelve in order to emphasize the divine word.

Most scholars dismissed or ignored Budde’s work, but it prompted a similar 1935 attempt by Ronald E. Wolfe to explain the composition of the Book of the Twelve as a whole. Wolfe employs source-critical methodology to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic in each of the Twelve Prophets. Such differentiation provides the basis for his reconstruction of a redactional process that formed the Book of the Twelve from the seventh through the third centuries BCE in which the book was reworked in relation to the concerns of the whole.

Scholars continued to show little interest in the question until a 1979 Yale dissertation by Dale Schneider combined canonical-critical interests with redaction criticism to pursue the issue further. His four-stage reconstruction appears to function much like earlier historical models insofar as it includes a first stage with the eighth-century prophets Hosea, Amos, and Micah; a second exilic stage with the seventh-century prophets Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah; the third stage is a late exilic collection of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah; and the fourth is a fifth-century collection of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Because his work remained unpublished, it had little influence.

Major interest in the question of the formation of the Book of the Twelve Prophets began to emerge in the redaction- and tradition-critical work of Odil Hannes Steck and his followers. Based upon his work on the prophets, Steck calls for assessment of the entire history of a biblical work from its initial composition to its final glosses (Steck 1998, 1991). Whereas Steck gives special attention to Isaiah in his own work, others employ his principles in relation to the Book of the Twelve. Peter Weimer's 1985 redaction-critical study of Obadiah identifies six layers of redaction in Obadiah. By correlating semantic features of Obadiah with other books among the Twelve, he points to similarities that in his view constitute evidence of later redaction that works the individual (p. 275) books into the emerging Book of the Twelve. Erich Bosshard's 1987 study of Isaiah and the Twelve Prophets likewise employs lexical and thematic correlations to argue that both books were edited by the same circles who were especially interested in the roles of the Day of YHWH tradition and the punishment of Edom as part of their understanding of YHWH's divine judgment against Israel/Judah and the nations prior to the restoration of Jerusalem. Together with Reinhold Gregor Kratz (Bosshard and Kratz 1990). Bosshard extends the thesis by attempting to demonstrate a three-stage process by which Malachi was added as the conclusion of the Book of the Twelve and the Prophets at large. Bosshard-Nepustil's 1997 study on the reception of Isa 1–39 in the Book of the Twelve employs detailed lexical and thematic associations to argue for two redactional stages that formed and correlated both works, including an "Assyrian-Babylonian" layer in Joel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, and a "Babylonian" layer in Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Zechariah from the late sixth century that reflects upon the significance of Cyrus.

Nogalski's 1993 (1993a and 1993b) two-volume study on the formation of the Book of Twelve employs a combination of catchword association, thematic considerations, and redaction-critical arguments to argue for a five-stage redaction of the Book of the Twelve Prophets (see also Nogalski 2011). The first stage stems from sixth-century BCE Deuteronomistic circles, which included Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah. A second stage added Haggai and Zech 1–8. A third, late fourth-century BCE stage added Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi. Later additions of both Zech 9–14 and Jonah completed the process in the early third-century BCE following the rise of Alexander the Great. Burkard Zapff's 1997 study attempts to relate the redaction of Micah to the models posited by Steck, Bosshard-Neustil, and Nogalski, and Aaron Schart's 1998 study builds upon and modifies this work by positing a six-stage process that begins with Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah with additions of Nahum and Habakkuk; Haggai and Zechariah; Joel and Obadiah; and Jonah and Malachi. Martin Beck's 2005 monograph attempts to refine and defend the role of the Day of YHWH tradition as a foundation for the composition of the Book of the Twelve.

Jakob Wöhrle's 2006 and 2008 studies attempt to present a new model for the formation of the Book of the Twelve. By employing the superscriptions of the books as a partial guide, he posits early collections, including the exilic collection of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah; the postexilic collection of Haggai and Zech 1–8; and a later collection of Joel and redacted forms of Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah. Subsequent combination and redaction of these collections focused on a first layer concerned with the foreign nations

and the Davidic promise in Joel, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Deutero-Zechariah; a second foreign nation layer, including elements from Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Deutero-Zechariah, and Malachi; integration of the Book of Habakkuk; a layer concerned with salvation for the nations in Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Deutero-Zechariah, and Malachi; a layer concerned with Grace in Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Deutero-Zechariah, and Malachi; and finally a canonical conclusion in Mal 3:22–24.

(p. 276) A number of studies attempt to present synchronic understandings of the final form of the Book of the Twelve, often with thematic emphases. Paul House's 1988 study argues that the Book of the Twelve presents a prophetic drama focused on the themes of sin (Hosea–Micah); punishment (Nahum–Zephaniah); and restoration (Haggai–Malachi). Terrence Collins's 1993 article argues that themes of covenant-election; fidelity and infidelity; fertility and infertility; turn and returning; the justice and mercy of G-d; the kingship of G-d; the place of G-d's dwelling on Mt. Zion (Temple); and the nations as enemies and allies work together to form the Book of the Twelve into a coherent work. John Barton's 1996 article calls for a canonical reading of the Book of the Twelve as an attempt to challenge the message of judgment in Hosea, Amos, and others with calls to preserve Israel by observing YHWH's Torah. My own two-volume 2000 commentary on the Book of the Twelve takes account of both the Masoretic and Septuagint structures of the Book of the Twelve to argue that the LXX structure is earlier and represents concern with the experience of the northern kingdom of Israel as a précis to that of southern Judah, whereas the MT order represents concern with Jerusalem throughout. Jason T. LeCureux's 2012 monograph argues that the major theme that unifies the Book of the Twelve is the call to return to YHWH, based in the Day of YHWH tradition. Daniel Timmer's 2015 study focuses on the role of the non-Israelite nations as a basic motif that aids in uniting the work.

Both the diachronic and synchronic models are open to critique. Despite the clear intellectual effort and diligence employed, the diachronic models fail to account for the fact that the LXX model of the Book of the Twelve undermines the detailed lexical arguments for the MT sequence of books, and they fail to note that expressions of the Day of YHWH are inconsistently formulated and understood within the individual books in which they appear (see, for example, Jones 1995). Likewise, the synchronic models largely overlook the clear evidence of diachronic formation within the individual books that constitute the Book of the Twelve. The importance of the formation of the Book of the Twelve continues as evidenced by the continued production of studies and collected essays that have appeared throughout the discussion (Watts and House 1996; Nogalski and Sweeney 2000; Redditt and Schart 2003; Ben Zvi and Nogalski 2009; Albertz et al. 2012; Boda et al. 2015).

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The Twelve Minor Prophets in Art and Music

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Abstract and Keywords

This brief study of reception history begins with how images and texts have been handled in works of visual art, giving some idea not only of how the Twelve Minor Prophets dress and what they look like in many different contexts but also, particularly in Christian tradition, how they have been used to illustrate details in the Gospel story. It begins with some independent statues and paintings and then turns to look briefly at how each of the Minor Prophets, starting with Jonah, has been portrayed in the light of details in the biblical text. It then looks at how the Twelve have been interpreted in oratorios, cantatas, and anthems, as well as in African American spirituals and popular songs, both Jewish and Christian.

Keywords: reception history, painting, mosaic, statue, sacred music, popular lyrics

THE Minor Prophets play a less colorful and important role in art and music than the Major Prophets. Occasionally all the prophets, Major and Minor, are portrayed by Christian artists altogether as a group, without names, as in Jan van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb* on the Ghent altarpiece (1425–1419), where there is a crowd of prophets in the foreground, and in the well-known fresco by Fra Angelico in the Chapel of San Brizio in the Orvieto Cathedral (1441), which shows a group of sixteen prophets labeled "The glorious assembly of the prophets" (Latin *Prophetarum Laudabilis Numerus*) (Figure 21.1). Elsewhere some of them are occasionally selected to join the Major Prophets as on Fra Angelico's "Mystic Wheel" in the Convent of San Marco, Florence (1451–1452), where Micah, Jonah, Joel, and Malachi appear along with Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and others, and, even better known, Michelangelo's ceiling in the Sistine Chapel, where there are beautiful paintings of Jonah, Joel, and Zechariah along with the four Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and five Sibyls.

Figure 21.1 The Glorious Assembly of the Prophets. Fra Angelico. 1441. Chapel of San Brizio, Orvieto Cathedral.

Because there is virtually no information in the biblical text about the prophets' age, appearance, and dress, identifying individual Minor Prophets in art and sculpture relies on various clues. Some are recognized by the inclusion of other characters or incidents in their lives as in the case of Hosea, Haggai, Zechariah, and more than any other, Jonah. Most often they are to be identified by scrolls in their hands as in the fifteenth-century illustrated *Biblia Pauperum*, where all of them, except Obadiah, appear holding in their hand a scroll with a text on it, interpreted as referring to a scene in the Gospel story.

There are also musical compositions of all kinds with settings of words from the Twelve. Most of them are sacred music like a motet by Thomas Tallis inspired by Joel 2 (1575), the finale of Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* (1846), and several modern oratorios, cantatas, and songs inspired by the Jonah story. Some are more secular like a comic song based on Jonah by a nineteenth-century German composer.

(p. 280) Until quite recently modern biblical scholarship was exclusively devoted to the task of reconstructing the original meaning of the text, with the tools of ancient Near Eastern parallels, biblical archaeology, textual criticism, and the like. Research on reception history—that is, how the text has been used and interpreted down the centuries by Jews, Christians, and Muslims in art, music, literature, theology, politics, and elsewhere—was strictly excluded from biblical studies. Such information was totally absent from the hundreds of biblical commentaries published over the last two centuries. This situation has changed dramatically in recent years, as can be seen in a new type of commentary series which includes *Six Minor Prophets through the Centuries* (Coggins and Han 2011) as well as many publications on "visual exegesis" by biblical scholars like Martin O'Kane,

Painting the Text: The Artist as Biblical Interpreter (2007) and Cheryl Exum, *Art as Biblical Commentary* (2019).

It is my pleasure, first, to consider how biblical images and texts have been handled in works of art, giving some idea not only of how the Twelve Minor Prophets dress and what they look like in many different contexts but also, particularly in Christian tradition, how they have been used to illustrate details in the Gospel story. We begin with (p. 281) some independent statues and paintings and then turn to look briefly at how each of the Minor Prophets, starting with Jonah, has been portrayed in the light of details in the biblical text. We shall then look at how they have been interpreted in oratorios, cantatas, and anthems, as well as in African American spirituals and popular songs, both Jewish and Christian. The examples discussed can be found in the works of art historians, musicologists, biblical scholars, and others, listed in the bibliography, and are referred to with vivid illustrations on the websites.

Statues, Paintings, and Mosaics

A number of striking sculptures from Renaissance Italy portray Minor Prophets without any explicit reference to a biblical text. Donatello's tall marble statue of Habakkuk (1423–1426) on the campanile of the Duomo in Florence, known by Italians as *il Zuccone* "pumpkin-head," clutches a scroll in his right hand and shows signs of terror on his face (cf. Hab.1:2; 3:16). On the same tower there is a marble statue of Obadiah by Nanni di Bertolo (c. 1422) showing the prophet unrolling a large scroll and looking very young and nervous. From an earlier period, intended originally for the façade of Siena Cathedral, there is a marble bust of Haggai by Giovanni Pisano (1285–1295), in which the prophet seems to lack the fire and passion of other biblical prophets. There is also a fine piece of German statuary from the early thirteenth century in Bamberg Cathedral, showing the square head of Jonah, with shaven skull, gathered brow, and half-open mouth, conveying tension and dramatic vision.

Among paintings of the Twelve, pride of place goes to Michelangelo's three on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel: Zechariah is above the center of the east wall (1509), with Joel on his right (1509) and Jonah above the Last Judgement at the other end of the chapel (1511). Zechariah is portrayed as an old bearded man reading from a book, with two affectionate little genii looking over his shoulder, and his contribution to the scene is his well-known prophecy about rejoicing when the king rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech 9:9). Joel is obviously younger than Zechariah and clearly in a state of divine inspiration, passionately absorbed in what he is reading on a flimsy white scroll, with two genii behind him who apparently disagree. The prophecy alluded to is obvious: "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28 [Heb. 3:1]). Michelangelo's Jonah, painted two years later, can be clearly identified by the great fish (Jon 2) and gourd tree (Jon 4) in the background. He also stands out from all the other prophets with his tousled hair, scantily dressed and lying back rather awkward-

ly with a passionate contemplative look on his face as he gazes up at the Creator above his head.

This brings us to portrayals of incidents in the lives of the Twelve Minor prophets. All kinds of detail have been portrayed in sculpture, paintings, stained glass, mosaics, and illuminated manuscripts.

We begin with Jonah, by far the most popular image, starting with early Christian iconography and later frequent in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic art down to the present day. (p. 282) Very striking are early portrayals of Jonah lying securely under the gourd tree, after emerging from three days and three nights in the belly of a whale (Jon 4:6), as a type of the risen Christ and echoing the ritual of baptism (Matt 12:40). There are beautiful third-century marble examples from Rome, one in the Louvre from the catacomb of Saint Priscilla and another on the side of a marble sarcophagus in the Vatican Museum, in four scenes showing Jonah being thrown into the sea, swallowed by a whale, emerging from the whale, and lying peacefully under a gourd tree. On another third-century sarcophagus in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome, his adventures are shown at one end and the Good Shepherd and the Baptism of Christ at the other, while another from the same period has more details of the Jonah story alongside Noah's ark and the resurrection of Lazarus. A beautiful fourth-century mosaic in the Patriarchal Basilica in Aquileia, near Venice, shows him lying naked, a hand behind his head, under a great branch heavily laden with leaves and gourds. In the Cleveland Museum, Ohio, there is an extraordinary marble sculpture showing a weird monster with two great paws on the ground, wings, ears, and a long fishtail curving over his head within reach of Jonah as he emerges, hands raised above his head, from the beast's great jaws (Figure 21.2). Jonah emerging from the jaws of a similar weird monster appears in an eleventh-century marble fragment in the Museo Campano in Capua.

Figure 21.2 Jonah Cast Up. 280–290 CE, Asia Minor. Cleveland Museum of Art.

In Byzantine tradition Jonah's prayer, which begins in Greek with "I called in my distress to the LORD my God…and he heard me from the belly of Hades" (Jon 2:29 [Heb. 2:1–8]), is (p. 283) sung like a Psalm and appears in illuminated Psalters. In the late ninth-century Khludov Psalter in the Historical Museum, Moscow, there is a picture of Jonah sitting at prayer in the belly of the huge creature. In the tenth-century Paris Psalter (Bibliothèque Nationale), the prayer is accompanied by a beautiful illustration showing, on the left, the saintly figure of Jonah with a halo speaking to the citizens outside the gate of Nineveh and, on the right, standing on his own on a hillside looking up to God. Below on a smaller scale, he is being thrown overboard by sailors into the jaws of a huge fish on one side and, on the other side, being spat out onto dry land (Figure 21.3).

Figure 21.3 Jonah. Paris Psalter. 10th century. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

(p. 284) In medieval Christian manuscripts, a picture of Jonah emerging from the mouth of the monster accompanies Christ's resurrection as in stained-glass windows like the Jungeres Bibelfenster in Cologne Cathedral (c. 1280). A marble sculpture by Lorenzo Lotti (Il Lorenzetto) in the Chigi Chapel of the Basilica of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome is based on a drawing of Hosea and Jonah by Raphael (1510) and shows Jonah emerging from the whale. Tintoretto's *Jonah Leaves the Whale's Belly* (1577–1578) shows a passionate confrontation between Jonah and his God, beside the terrifying jaws of a monstrous fish (Jon 2:10).

Other scenes from Jonah's life that have been depicted in visual art include him being thrown into the stormy sea by angry sailors (1:15), preaching to the Ninevites (3:3–5), and resting peacefully under the gourd tree (4:6). One of John Martin's dramatic oil paintings, *The Repentance of the Ninevites* (c. 1840), shows a group of white-robed figures kneeling in prayer in darkness outside the great gate of the Assyrian city. A twentieth-century example is the Japanese printmaker Sadao Watanabe (1913–1996), an evangelical Christian whose numerous decorative biblical prints include some striking portrayals of Jonah at sea.

A thirteenth-century Jewish Bible manuscript shows Jonah being thrown from a small ship into the mouth of a huge fish in the sea. Striking modern Jewish interpretations of the story include a variety of paintings and sketches by Chagall and a remarkable painting by the Russian artist Eugene Abeshaus (1939–2008) in which a thoughtful East European Jew, dressed in black, is standing with two suitcases on a gangplank that leads out of the mouth of a huge whale on to the pier at Haifa (Figure 21.4). There are also some beautiful Islamic illustrations of the story, such as a fourteenth-century manuscript showing the giant fish in the sea looking rather affectionately at Jonah as he lies safely on shore under

a gourd tree and a sixteenth-century manuscript which portrays a huge angel assisting Jonah as he is rescued by the monster in the sea (Figure 21.5).

Figure 21.4 Jonah and the Whale at Haifa Port. Eugene Abeshaus. 1978. Fenster Jewish Museum, Tulsa Oklahoma. With kind permission of Veronica Abeshaus.

Figure 21.5 The Rescue of Jonah. 15th century manuscript of *Jami al-Tawarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles). Metropolitan Museum, New York.

There are fewer references in the Bible to incidents in the lives of the other Minor Prophets that can be used by artists. There are some striking medieval illustrations of Hosea showing him, on God's instructions, embracing an adulteress in bed (twelfth-century German) or in the open country (fourteenth-century French) as a parable of God's love for his people Israel despite their idolatrous behavior (Hos 3:1–5). In an engraving by Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), Hosea is shown addressing a woman with three children (Hos 1:2–8), under the bright face of the Almighty looking down on them. A nineteenth-century engraving shows him preaching energetically to a group of men sacrificing to idols in a great forest (Hos 4:13).

A beautiful seventh-century Byzantine ivory plaque in the Louvre shows Joel outside a great city, robes flowing wildly, his left foot forward dramatically, looking up and pointing with his right hand to heaven; on a scroll in his left hand are the Greek words for “The LORD was jealous for his land, and had pity on his people” (Joel 2:18) (Figure 21.6). A very different nineteenth-century picture of Joel from an educational card shows him in a rather lush environment announcing that God will send corn (Joel 2:19), while fig trees and vines will give their full yield (Joel 2:22).

Figure 21.6 Joel. 7th or 8th century. Syria or Palestine. The Louvre, Paris.

(p. 285) Amos is regularly portrayed as a shepherd rather than a prophet (Amos 1:1; cf. 7:14). In an illuminated letter in the twelfth-century Souvigny Bible, he is with his sheep in the country and reading the text beginning “Seek good and not evil that you may live” (Amos 5:14) on a scroll held out to him in the hand of God. Another illuminated letter in the fifteenth-century Great Bible (St. Jerome Version) shows God appearing to him as he tends his sheep outside the city. In a striking engraving by Gustav Doré (1866), he stands alone on a hillside, leaning on his shepherd’s crook, his eyes cast down, with a vast landscape stretching out before him with the walls of a city nearby. Elsewhere there is no suggestion of his rural background as in the Jesse Tree in the fourteenth-century stained-glass window in St Mary’s Church, Shrewsbury, and in a fifteenth-century fresco in the cupola of the Basilica della Santa Casa in Loreto, where, dressed like Hosea in a splendid red robe, he sits holding a tablet with words of judgement on Israel “for three transgressions and for four” (Amos 2:6), while above him hovers an angel holding the pincers of Christ’s Passion.

Obadiah is rarely portrayed. In one case in the initial letter of the Book of Obadiah in the Winchester Bible (1150–1180), he is identified with an Obadiah “who was over the household” in the reign of Ahab and portrayed feeding a group of prophets who are fleeing

from Jezebel with bread and water (1 Kgs 18:4). In a fifteenth-century French manuscript, (p. 286) "the Vision of Obadiah" (Obad 1) is illustrated by a picture of him asleep in bed while out of a starry sky God looks down upon him with a blessing.

Gustav Doré's Micah shows him standing on a stone platform, hands raised above his head, preaching repentance to his people, while a small number of men, one apparently asleep, seem to lack interest in what he is saying about their sins (Mic 6:7–8). In a woodcut in a Luther Bible (1541), he is shown addressing people outside the gate of Jerusalem, while in the background an angel announces the birth of Jesus to the shepherds near the city of Bethlehem (Mic 5:2) and a star shines over Mary, Joseph, and the baby. In a Jesse Tree on the marble façade of Orvieto Cathedral (1310–1330), he is shown pointing to the figure of Mary in travail (cf. Mic 4:9–13) in front of Bethlehem, "little among the clans of Judah" (Mic 5:2), contrasted with the great city of Jerusalem. The scene is described as both the "Blessing of Bethlehem" and the "Curse of Jerusalem" (O'Brien 2015). An oil painting among the prophets and sybils heralding the Annunciation above the altar in St. Bavo Cathedral in Ghent (1432) shows Micah in splendid robes looking down from his study, with his words addressed to Bethlehem in large letters above his head (Mic 5:2).

In a fifteenth-century French manuscript, the seated prophet Nahum is shown foretelling the destruction of Nineveh (Nah 1:1) against the background of a spectacular view of a tower crashing down from the top of an oriental city, while in the fifteenth-century Great Bible (St. Jerome Version) he observes God sending down from heaven a (p. 287) huge storm breaking rocks (Nah 1:6). A spectacular mezzotint engraving by John Martin (1829) shows the invading armies entering the city through the collapsed fortifications under a tempestuous sky, while the doomed Ninevites scatter in huge groups like ants and their king orders the construction of an immense funeral pyre on which he will burn to death with his concubines and treasures.

Unlike Donatello's Habakkuk, Gian Lorenzo Bernini's lively marble statue in the Basilica di Santa Maria in Rome (1655–1661) was inspired by the tradition that Habakkuk was approached by an angel, preparing to lift him by his hair and carry him to Babylon to rescue Daniel from the lions' den (Dan 14:33–42, Greek version) (Figure 21.7). Earlier graphic allusions to this apocryphal story can be seen on the wooden doors of the Church of Santa Sabina in Rome (c. 430) and on a fifth-century ivory pyxis from North Africa, now in the British Museum, where Daniel is kneeling in prayer between two lions, looking up toward an angel as Habakkuk approaches with a basket of food for him. Two lovely stained-glass windows in the fifteenth-century Cathedral of Peter and Paul in Troyes show one scene of Habakkuk on his knees offering food to Daniel, with the angel above holding a lock of his hair, and another of Daniel, his arms crossed, looking gratefully at Habakkuk, while two lions with open mouths are still threatening him. An illumination in a thirteenth-century Byzantine manuscript shows Habakkuk alone in the wilderness, cringing in fear from God's hand which comes out of heaven and (p. 288) apparently turns the landscape gold. The approaching Chaldaean army is dramatically portrayed in a Dutch engraving (1735): "their horses swifter than leopards…their horsemen from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour" (1:9). The suggestion that his joyful prayer (Hab 3) was sung in the Temple,

accompanied by his stringed instruments (3:19) is beautifully depicted in another Dutch illustration (1713), while in the cupola of the Dominican church in Genova he is seated like Hosea and Micah holding his scroll with the words: “yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation” (3:18).

Figure 21.7 Habakkuk and the Angel. Gian Lorenzo Bernini.1655–61. Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.

There is a beautiful fifteenth-century German stained-glass roundel in the Victoria and Albert Museum showing Zephaniah in splendid ermine robes and hat, carrying a (p. 289) golden scepter, and surrounded by a large scroll reading “until the day I rise up” (3:8). The Book of Zephaniah concludes with a celebration of the final defeat of the enemies of Jerusalem, beginning “Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion” (Zeph 3:14–20), and this is dramatically portrayed in a Dutch engraving (1715) showing the wealthy Babylonian oppressors and their belongings strewn round the foreground while the people set off in a joyful procession over the hills toward a new city of Jerusalem with Yahweh’s name inscribed on a blazing sun above it.

Haggai is quite often shown reproving Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Hag 2:2, 21) as in an eleventh-century illuminated Spanish manuscript and a Luther Bible woodcut (1534), while in a fifteenth-century Italian manuscript he is encouraging the Jews to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. When the people obeyed, Haggai brought to them the LORD’s message, “I am with you” (Hag 1:12–13), a scene illustrated in an etching by Alex Fletcher in his *Scripture History* (1838).

There is a beautiful pen and ink sketch by Rembrandt (c. 1635) showing Zechariah in earnest conversation with an angel (Zech 1:9). His vision of four horns explained by an angel as “the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem” (1:18–19) is illustrated in Thomas Bankes’s *Family Bible* (1790), while an engraving of his vision of the

huge flying scroll, “the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land” (5:1–4), appears in Adam Clarke’s *Family Bible* (1815). A dramatic engraving by Gustav Doré (1865) shows Zechariah’s vision of four brightly lit chariots appearing from between two huge dark mountains, each ridden by a winged angel holding the reins of two horses in each hand (Zech 6) (Figure 21.8). In a painting by the eighteenth-century French painter Ambroise Crozat, he is portrayed as a priest on the Temple steps (perhaps drawing from Neh 12:16; Matt 23:35). The hat on the head of Zechariah in Claus Sluter’s famous sculpture in Dijon known as the *Well of Moses* also suggests he is a priest, relating him to John the Baptist’s father (Luke 1:5). A detailed engraving from a Luther Bible (1685) shows the prophet sharing in the spectacle of Christ on a donkey leading a crowd up to the great gate of Jerusalem (Zech 9:9).

Figure 21.8 Zechariah’s vision. Gustav Doré. 1865.

In an engraving by the Dutch artist Romeyn de Hooghe (1709), Malachi’s vision of the great day of the LORD (Mal 4 [Heb. 3:19-24]) shows him haranguing his people in the midst of a scene of terror as Elijah approaches out of the sky in a chariot drawn by two wild-looking horses (4:5 [Heb. 3:23];) and followed by winged angels carrying the tablets of the law from Horeb (4:4 [Heb. 3:22]). In the background can be seen “the sun of righteousness” shining brightly with the scales of justice on its face (4:2 [Heb. 3:20]).

We turn finally to numerous examples where the prophet is identified by a biblical text written beside him, or on a scroll in his hand. Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah appear with their texts (Hos 6:2: Joel 2:28; Amos 9:13; Obad 1:17) in a great twelfth-century mosaic on the north wall of the Romanesque cathedral in Cefalu Sicily. In the Prayer Book of St. Elizabeth of Hungary (c. 1220), Isaiah and Micah with their scrolls (Isa 7.14; Mic 5:2) comment on scenes showing the Annunciation and the Nativity, and in Queen Mary’s Psalter (c. 1310) a full-page illustration shows six prophets (Zephaniah, Micah, Daniel, Joel, Malachi, and Ezekiel), each with a scroll and paired with one of Apostles. In a very

beautiful fifteenth-century fresco in the Dominican Church of Santa (p. 290) Maria di Castello in Genoa, Hosea is seated wearing a splendid ermine cloak and huge soft hat, holding a long scroll in his right hand with the words in Latin: “I am the LORD your God. You shall know no god but me” (Hos 13:4). Micah sits opposite him, dressed in the same rich clothes, with a scroll reading: “Therefore I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation” (Mic 7:7). In Duccio di Buoninsegna’s great *Maestà* (p. 291) (1308–1311), Hosea with his scroll (Hos 11:1) stands with Jeremiah (Jer 31:15) next to a painting of *The Flight into Egypt* (Matt 2:15), and Malachi (Mal3:1) with Solomon or David (Ps 72:9) accompanies *The Presentation in the Temple*. In Sluter’s *Well of Moses* (mentioned earlier), a very solemn Zechariah with his scroll (Zech 11:12) joins Moses (Exod 29:39), David (Ps 22:16), Jeremiah (Lam 1:12), Daniel (9:26), and Isaiah (Isa 53:7) to commemorate Christ’s passion.

All of the Twelve except Obadiah appear regularly on pages of the illustrated *Biblia Pauperum* (“The Book of the Poor”), printed in fifteenth-century Holland and Germany; each prophet is depicted with a scroll describing in his words what is going on in scenes from the Gospel of Christ. Habakkuk and Micah appear with the Nativity (Hab 3:2; Mic 5:2), while Zechariah, Malachi, and Zephaniah are quoted beside illustrations of Jesus being presented in the Temple: “The master whom you seek shall come to the holy temple” (Mal 3:1; cf. Zech 2:10; Zeph 3:15). Four prophets describe the fall of idols when the Holy Family visit Egypt (Hos 10:2; Zech 13:2; Nah 1:14, Zeph 2:11; cf. Isa 19:1), while verses from Zechariah accompany illustrations of Jesus’s baptism (Zech 13:1), his entry into Jerusalem (9:9), his driving the moneychangers out of the Temple (14:21), the priests paying Judas thirty pieces of silver (11:12), and the wounding of Jesus on the Cross (13:6). A dramatic picture of the Transfiguration illustrates a verse from Habakkuk (3:4), and words from Micah and Jonah are addressed by Christ to the disciples in Gethsemane (Mic 2:10; Jon 4:3). The scene of Jonah being cast into the sea and swallowed by the whale illustrates Jesus being placed in the tomb (Jon 2:1–11), while the prophet’s safe arrival on dry land after three days in the sea accompanies the resurrection (1:17); resurrection is referred to also by Hosea (Hos 6:3) and Zephaniah (Zeph 3:8). A verse from Micah accompanies an illustration of the Ascension (2:13) while Joel clearly describes Pentecost (Joel 2:29 [Heb. 3:2]).

Musical Settings

Texts from the Twelve figure in oratorios and cantatas as well as some anthems, hymns, African American spirituals, and popular songs. Two of Buxtehude’s *Membra Jesu Nostri* (1689), a cycle of seven musical meditations on Christ’s wounds, often regarded as the first Lutheran oratorio, are devoted to his feet (Nah 1:15 [Heb. 2:1]) and his hands: “What are those wounds in the middle of your hands?” (Zech 13:6, Vg). An early German Protestant Passion oratorio *Der blutige und sterbende Jesus* (1704) makes dramatic use of the allegorical image of the Daughter of Zion in Mic 4:10: “Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail.” There are striking choral settings of verses from Joel and Zechariah in Sullivan’s oratorio *The Light of the World* (1873) and

Elgar's *The Kingdom* (1906): "I will pour forth of my spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28 [Heb. 3:1])…Pour upon us the spirit of grace…there shall be a fountain opened to the House of David" (Zech 12:10; 13:1).

Near the beginning of Handel's *Messiah* (1742) a bass recitative and aria based on Hag 2:6–7 and Mal 3:1–2 ("But who may abide the day of his coming?") are followed by the (p. 292) famous chorus "And he shall purify the sons of Levi that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness, in righteousness" (Mal 3:3). The choral finale of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (1846), celebrating the coming of the Messiah (Isa 41:25; 42:1; 11:2; 57:8), is introduced by the last words of the Old Testament set as a soprano recitative: "Behold I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes" (Mal 4:5–6 [Heb. 3:23–24]).

A motet for five voices by Thomas Tallis, *In jejunio et fletu* ("In Fasting and Weeping" [1575]), sung in the Roman rite on the first Sunday in Lent, is a poignant setting of Joel 2:12, 17: "In fasting and weeping the priests prayed, Spare, O LORD, spare thy people." A century later the same passage (Joel 2:15–17) inspired an anthem by Henry Purcell for seven soloists, choir, and continuo (1679), beginning with a choral fanfare "Blow up the trumpet in Sion" (2:15) and concluding after pleading for mercy on people in distress, with the question, "Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" (2:17).

A powerful and original anthem inspired by Habakkuk, *For, lo, I raise up*, was composed by Charles Villiers Stanford in a search for hope at the beginning of World War I (1914). It begins with the voice of God, "For, lo, I raise up that bitter and hasty nation" and a choral account of the approaching enemy as "swifter than leopards…more fierce than the evening wolves" (Hab 1:6–11). Then the voice of Habakkuk sung by the choir intervenes, "Art not thou from everlasting, O LORD, my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die" (1:12; 2:1), and God's reply is sung by tenors and basses: "The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie…for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (2:2–3, 14, 20). Habakkuk 2:14 provided Arthur Ainger, vicar and schoolmaster at Eton, with a refrain for his well-known hymn beginning "God is working his purpose out" (1894). "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" (v.20) in the *English Hymnal* (1906) is a modern translation of a fourth-century Greek hymn from the Liturgy of St. James, set to a traditional French carol tune and arranged by Vaughan Williams. The verse also inspired a choral setting by Gustav Holst (1916) and an anthem for a cappella chorus by Edward Bairstow (1925).

Vaughan Williams's cantata *Dona nobis pacem* was composed as a plea for peace in 1936. It offers dramatic settings of poems by Walt Whitman on the American Civil War and a biblical text about the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 8:15–22), but it ends with a movement inspired by many biblical texts, including Mic 4:3 and Hag 2:9: "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace." John Harbison's cantata *Flight into Egypt* (1986) focuses on the story of King Herod and the Massacre of Innocents (Matt 2) and has a choral setting of

Hos 11:1 (“Out of Egypt I called my son”), placed alongside Rachel weeping for her children (Jer 31:15) and reference to “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3; Ps 22:6).

The Book of Jonah inspired a number of works starting with an oratorio by Carissimi (c. 1650), less well known than his *Jepthe* (1648) but containing some powerful choruses culminating in *Peccavimus* (“We have sinned), a dramatic confession by the repentant (p. 293) citizens of Nineveh. *Jonah and the Whale*, an oratorio by the American Dominick Argento first performed in Minneapolis in 1973, is a setting of passages from the Book of Jonah as well as a medieval English poem, a sea shanty, and Ps 130 (*De profundis*). Cantatas devoted to the figure of Jonah include two by the French composer Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1708, 1711), a chamber cantata by the Canadian John Beckwith (1963), *Jonah: A Musical Morality* by William Mathias (1989), and *Jonah: The Man without Tolerance* (2004) by the Jewish composer Samuel Adler. John Tavener’s dramatic cantata *The Whale: A Biblical Fantasy,* first performed in 1968 and at a London Promenade concert in 1969, is scored for soloists, chorus, orchestra, speaker, and nonorchestral instruments like a whip and a football rattle. It is in eight sections, including “The Storm,” “The Swallowing,” “The Prayer,” “In the Belly,” and “The Vomiting.”

Verses from Zephaniah (1:15–16, Vulgate), along with verses from the Book of Revelation (20:11–15), Matthew (25:31–46), and others, probably inspired the mediaeval hymn about the Day of Judgment beginning *Dies irae, dies illa* (“The day of wrath, that day”). The dramatic *Dies Irae* chorus is a very well-known part of settings of the Requiem Mass by Mozart (1791), Berlioz (1837), Verdi (1874), Fauré (1890), and others, as well as Britten’s *War Requiem* (1962). The traditional Gregorian melody figures prominently in many works such as Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830), Gounod’s *Faust* (1859), and six works by Rachmaninov, including his symphonies (1897, 1908, 1936), his *Symphonic Dances* (1940), and his *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* (1934). It also features in Penderecki’s oratorio *Dies Irae. Auschwitz Oratorium* (1976) and in John Williams’s music for the Star Wars movie *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) (for further discussion, see O’Brien 2018).

The story of Hosea’s adulterous marriage (Hos 1–3) inspired a popular song by the American singer and songwriter Michael Card on his album *The Word: Recapturing the Imagination* (1992). Sung in the first person, the “Song of Gomer” tells in beautiful lyrical music how Hosea loved her with “The fondness of a father/The passion of a child/The tenderness of a loving friend/An understanding smile” but pities him for being so stupid: “A fool to love someone like me/A fool to suffer silently.” The New Zealander Brooke Fraser’s song “Hosea’s Wife” on her album *Albertine* (2006) also presents Gomer as a symbol of tragic human failure asking, “What do I live for?” while the soaring animated chorus, identifying with her (“We are Hosea’s wife/We are squandering this life/Using people like ladders and words like knives”) sings, “Come and live again/Leave all you were before/To believe is to begin” (for other musical interpretations of Gomer, see McEntire’s essay in this volume).

Jonah figures in “Didn’t My LORD Deliver Daniel,” an African American spiritual first published in 1872, which argues in a lively optimistic rhythm that if God delivered Daniel from the lions’ den, Jonah from the belly of a whale, and the three children from the fiery furnace, then “Why not everyman?” At about the same time the German composer Josef Rheinberger wrote a secular song telling how Jonah dropped into a miserable pub called “The Whale” (*Der Jonas kehrt im Walfisch ein*, 1873). More recently Jonah and Noah inspired the much-performed song “Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive,” appearing as famous characters who accentuated the positive in times of (p. 294) crisis. The lyric was written by Johnny Mercer with music by Harold Arlen and first performed in 1944. Subsequent recordings include performances by Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters (1944), Ella Fitzgerald (1961), Aretha Franklin (1962), Cliff Richard (2010), and Paul McCartney (2012). *Jonah-Man Jazz* is a popular pastiche jazz cantata composed by the English musician Michael Hurd (1966). Incorporating blues and rock and roll for children’s voices, narrator, and orchestra, it is a child-friendly version of the biblical story with choruses like “Go down, Jonah, deep in the ocean” and “We had a wonderful party and Jonah had a whale of time.” Finally, “The Belly of the Whale” is one of the best-known songs of the short-lived band Burning Sensations from Los Angeles (1982). The songwriter likens himself to Jonah in the belly of a whale, at first enjoying the opportunity to have fun but soon realizing it is the place he longs to escape from.

Among Hebrew songs that are settings of texts from the Minor Prophets, there is one by Aminadav Aloni (1928–1999) using the LORD’s loving words to Hosea “And I will betroth you to me for ever” (Hos 2:19–20 [Heb. 2:21–22]). Another by David Zehavi (1910–1977) is a joyful setting of words from Amos beginning *Ve-hittifu ve-hittifu heharim assis*: “And the mountains shall drop sweet wine (2x), And all the hills shall flow with it (2x)” (Amos 9:13). The popular *Roni ve-simchi*, “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; For I am coming” (Zech.2:10), was sung particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. In a popular Hasidic lyric, words from the last two verses of the Book of Malachi are sung to a lively dance tune: “I will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers (2x). Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes” (Mal 4:6, 5 [Heb. 3:24, 23]). As in this song, traditionally in the liturgical reading of the passage on the Great Sabbath preceding Passover, 4:5 [Heb. 3:23] is repeated after 4:6 [3:24].

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Reading the Minor Prophets for Gender and Sexuality

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explores the possibilities of reading the Minor Prophets with gender and sexuality in mind. It grounds the analysis within the conceptual framework of inscription and erasure that poststructuralist theorists advance and that feminist biblical scholar Esther Fuchs models in her work on female biblical prophets. The essay shows that inscription and erasure are crucial concepts for the reading of the Minor Prophets because this conceptual framework advances the feminist-poststructuralist insight that the inscription of gender and sexuality depends on its erasure both in the text and in biblical scholarship. The essay thus challenges readings that essentialize, naturalize, and universalize approaches to gender and sexuality in biblical texts, often limiting interpretations to the inscription of female imagery and women characters.

Keywords: Minor Prophets, rape, feminist, queer, masculinity, inscription and erasure, Esther Fuchs, poststructuralism, marriage metaphor, gender and sexuality

NO properly credentialed scholar of the Hebrew Bible would claim that the poetry of the Twelve depicts literally the historical circumstances as they happened when this body of literature was composed. These texts are not nonfiction about a long bygone era but poetry. The question is how to read prophetic biblical texts if they do not depict the historical "realities" of their time and place. This difficulty becomes even more pronounced when we read the Minor Prophets with concerns about gender and sexuality in mind, given that gender and sexuality are thoroughly contemporary concerns. Any kind of contemporary interpretation, historiographical or not, however, is always "modern," and so the quest for gender and sexuality in the Twelve is a legitimate pursuit.

The invitation to read the Minor Prophets for gender and sexuality strikes most readers as a new idea because Jewish and Christian readers have rarely commented explicitly on their gendered or sexualized scripts. These scripts are often invisibly embedded in readers' interpretations, as they take for granted the androcentric prophetic rhetoric as a neutral depiction in which the "other" is deviant, heretical, or silenced. Gender and sexu-

ality have thus always been part of the interpretative process though in unmarked ways. When masculinity is proclaimed as the ordinary, the familiar, and the universal, the male becomes human and the human appears to be male (Daly 1973). In contrast, feminist, womanist, and queer interpretations seem new and even biased only because of their acknowledged hermeneutical postures.

The first feminist interpretation on the Minor Prophets goes back to a short essay published in 1985 by T. Drorah Setel on the female imagery in Hos 1–3. Characteristic of early feminist work on the Bible, Setel interprets a text that until then was read as a poem about God's love for Israel (Setel 1985). That this poem could also be read as a deeply patriarchal text was thus entirely unexpected and shocking. Setel's assertion that Hos 1–3 objectifies women in ways similar to contemporary pornography seemed scandalous (p. 300) at the time, although later feminist exegetes branded other prophetic texts as "pornoprophetic" literature, too (Brenner 1996, 1997). Assuming the historical-critical conventions of the 1980s, Setel examines the poem's "representations of Israel and Yahweh as a woman and a man" (Setel 1985, 91), arguing that the writer contrasts "Yahweh's positive (male) fidelity with Israel's negative (female) harlotry" (Setel 1985, 93). The gender binary enables the biblical prophet to degrade woman, identifying her with the land and denying her positive role in "human reproduction and nurturance" (Setel 1985, 93). Such imagery objectifies all women in negative ways, whereas the male images depict men as husbands positively and equate them with God. Setel's recognition that for some readers this misogynistic poem cannot be the word of God hit the feminist exegetical scene between its eyes, spurring the proliferation of feminist exegetical works on the Minor Prophets (Kelle 2009).

This essay grounds its analysis of gender and sexuality in the Minor Prophets within the conceptual framework of inscription and erasure modeled in the work of another important feminist scholar, Esther Fuchs (Fuchs 2001). The first section of the essay elaborates on the conceptual framework of inscription and erasure, as developed by poststructuralist theorists and as employed by Fuchs in her work. The second section outlines how feminist, queer, and womanist readings inscribe gender and sexuality in the Minor Prophets. The third section explores responses to the erasure of gender and sexuality in the Twelve, as illustrated in approaches relying on masculinity studies. As a whole, the essay contributes to a theoretically grounded reading of the Minor Prophets in which issues of gender and sexuality center the discussion. It makes clear that inscription and erasure are crucial concepts for reading the Minor Prophets for gender and sexuality, advancing the feminist-poststructuralist insight that the inscription of gender and sexuality depends on their erasure both in the text and in biblical scholarship. The essay thus challenges so-called gender-neutral and right-wing readings that essentialize, naturalize, and universalize approaches to gender and sexuality in biblical texts, often limiting interpretations to the inscription of female imagery and women characters (Scholz 2017, 149–169).

Inscription and Erasure as a Conceptual Framework

The biblical imaginary offers superb case studies for exploring the poststructuralist conviction that texts offer insights into reality as constructs of language. These constructs play out particularly well in the study of "difference" such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, geopolitics, age, religion, or physical abilities. The binary of inscription and erasure is a poststructuralist concept that illustrates the politics of the textual imaginary in the world, and its study leads to the reconsideration of the ethics involved in interpretation. As Andrea Bachner puts it: "If inscription is the framework through which (p. 301) poststructuralist theory is conscripting us to look (for now), and if we want to arrive at a more ethical construction of differences, we need to formulate an ethics of inscription that would also be an ethics of theory" (Bachner 2018, 207).

To poststructuralist thinkers, inscription and erasure are interchangeable forms of identity. Their boundaries are blurred because texts do not leave behind a single trace prescribing only one, singular way of meaning. Since texts do not hold absolute or exclusive meaning-inscribing or meaning-erasing power, inscription and erasure collaborate. They are complicit because inscription requires the erasure of other options (Bachner 2018, 198). The problem then becomes how to "undo the inscriptive logics" (Bachner 2018, 194). If masculinity, whiteness, heterosexuality, and physical ability are the norms of past and present scripts, the mere recovery of the erased "Other" will not reach full inclusion. Accordingly, poststructuralists know that "the representation of naked deviations from the norms of whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality, or ability…does not necessarily mean an increase in value" (Bachner 2018, 195). Rather, the opposite is the case: inscription cannot be thought without erasure, even when erasure remains invisible. Only ambiguity, uncertainty, or doubt interrupts the economy of difference. The following questions aim to get at the heart of the poststructuralist quest for uncovering the ambiguities of the rhetoric of difference, as they persist in texts inscribing and erasing difference:

> What is at stake in the staging and representation of scenes of inscription? What differences does inscription highlight? How are these constructed and what is their status? In what ways, for what purpose, and to what end does inscription deploy them? How do texts use such scenes to subvert or reify binaries like male and female, the cultural same and the other, the body and the text, the figurative and the literal—even as (and particularly whenever) they purport to deconstruct dichotomies in general? (Bachner 2018, 194)

These questions ensure the exposure of the rhetoric of difference that produces the realities of difference.

The recognition of inscription as erasure and erasure as inscription also teaches that poststructuralist theories are not exempt from the process of inscription and erasure. As Bachner suggests:

> If we accept that much depends on our interpretation, on how we see things and work upon the perspective of others, we have to assume theoretical responsibility and initiative, even if we cannot think agency in facile terms or believe that any of our acts truly initiate something. (Bachner 2018, 207)

Poststructuralist analysis thus involves decisions about politics and ethics, in full knowledge of the limitations of those decisions.

Fuchs is one of the few feminist biblical scholars who applies inscription and erasure as "a conceptual deep structure" or "a profound epistemic structure" (Bachner 2018, 3) to prophetic literature. Identifying biblical women or feminine images as material signifiers, (p. 302) she shows that prophetic speech needs to be examined as an expression of inscription and erasure. Fuchs observes that women are called prophet (*neviah*) only five times in the Hebrew Bible, and on these five occasions the female characters are simultaneously inscribed and erased as prophets. Fuchs's detailed analysis of each character—Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, and the nameless wife of Isaiah—shows that each woman is inscribed and erased as a prophet. Fuchs posits: the inscription and erasure of female prophets not only exposes the respective texts as inherently androcentric, according to which the male is superior to the female, but it also articulates the theological necessity of eliminating female prophets from the articulation of biblical monotheism. Fuchs explains with shattering lucidity:

> Prophecy is the core and culmination of the monotheistic paradigm. The discursive intermingling of God's words and those of the male prophets represents the apotheosis of the andro-theistic relationship infrastructure of monotheistic ideology. The andro-theistic relationship must preclude female discourse. (Fuchs 2001, 68)

In other words, Fuchs argues that biblical monotheism requires the exclusion of women as prophets. Five women are called prophets as a strategy to uphold the pretense of inclusivity. The development of the monotheistic faith which depends on prophetic speech stipulates that only men speak with God and God speaks only with men. Despite a perfunctory recognition of women as prophets, then, female prophets must be erased because their presence endangers the exclusive male–divine relationship as the foundation of monotheism. The inscription of a few select women as prophets and the simultaneous erasure of their prophetic status guarantee the compliance of both women and men to a theological discursive system that eliminates women from meaningful interaction with the deity.

Fuchs's thesis is so devastating because prophetic texts illustrate it so obviously. The most apparent inscription and erasure of women as prophets appears in Ezek 13. Although male prophets are also rejected as so-called false prophets, Fuchs observes that female prophets are dismissed in much harsher ways than their male colleagues. Ezekiel 13 not only describes the women as "dabbl[ing] in witchcraft for profit" but they are also "derided and denigrated in stronger terms than their male equivalents" (Fuchs 2001, 67). Fuchs notes that not every male prophet is acceptable but that one man, Ezekiel, is a

qualified prophet who “exonerates men as a class from the global indictment that women as a class cannot escape” (Fuchs 2001, 66). Crucially, according to Fuchs, the women do not speak in Ezek 13, and so their words are erased. Readers are left with a prophetic text about women chastised as “prophesying falsehood and destroying innocent people” (Fuchs 2001, 68). Despite being inscribed, the women prophets are ultimately erased; they vanish from the biblical book. Their words are truncated, displaced, eliminated, and unknown. Women prophets exist only in the male prophetic imagination which reduces them to sexualized bodies, ready to be taken, used, or even killed (e.g., Ezek 23).

Fuchs’s feminist-poststructuralist analysis is as powerful as it is devastating. It also applies to the Minor Prophets where, with a few textual exceptions, female images and (p. 303) characters are largely absent. Female prophets are completely erased. Yet the absence of women does not mean that gender or sexuality is not present. The recognition that inscription and erasure always exist, within blurred boundaries, clarifies that gender and sexuality are always an issue even when gender or sexuality is out of sight. The poststructuralist concept thus underscores that the Minor Prophets must be read for gender and sexuality. Such readings ought not to be limited to queer, womanist, and feminist interpretations, although they have brought gender and sexuality to the field’s attention.

Blurring the Lines in Feminist, Queer, and Womanist Readings: Inscribing Women into the Minor Prophets

While androcentric approaches have relegated gender and sexuality to the invisible margins, readings for gender and sexuality have turned their attention directly to these matters, searching for metaphors, topics, characters, or traditions about gender and sexuality. Julia O’Brien articulates it well: “By revealing how prophetic rhetoric sounds to woman-identified readers, feminist critics have shown that the value placed on prophetic texts by earlier interpreters is less a function of the texts themselves and more a function of those readers’ alliances. Patriarchy, or at least androcentrism in interpretation leads to the explicit or implicit acceptance of patriarchy in the text” (O’Brien 2008, 37). Or as Yvonne Sherwood puts it: “[A] text is never a ‘brute fact’ outside the consciousness of the reader” (Sherwood 1996, 17). Similarly, queer interpreters have looked for “queerness” in the Bible, finding it “not just in a handful of selected texts, but across the board in every text of the First and Second Testaments” (Guest et al. 2006, xiii). Furthermore, womanist exegetes have brought African American women’s experiences to the Bible (Byron and Lovelace 2016).

The inscription of female images and women in the Minor Prophets has been a groundbreaking hermeneutical strategy after more than two thousand years of silence. Uplifting the “other” in terms of gender and sexuality was nurtured by sociopolitical movements for gender justice since the 1970s. Feminist exegesis has also depended on the willingness of interpreters to think outside established norms of gender and sexuality, to chal-

lenge heteronormative regimes of exegetical and cultural power, and to resist kyriarchal exclusionary practices in biblical studies and religious organizations for which the Bible has been central.

One major focus of feminist attention has been the extraordinary poetry of Hos 1–3. The so-called marriage metaphor has garnered considerable feminist concerns, marking "a significant shift in Hosea scholarship" (Kelle 2009, 197). Some feminist interpreters have tried to reconstruct the historical, religious, or even biographical details of the female character. Others have investigated the theological impact of the sexual imagery in the biblical texts. Many have critiqued the ideology of the poem, asserting its ongoing significance in women's lives today in which physical, sexual, and domestic violence (p. 304) continues to prevail. For instance, Gale A. Yee observes that "Yahweh engages in a three-part strategy to curb his 'wife's' actions":

> This strategy reflects the social methods of the patrilineal, honor/shame culture… to control women's sexuality. The first thing the husband does is segregate his wife from her lovers.…The second part of the husband's strategy is a series of physical and psychological punishments against the wife.…The third part of the husband's strategy to control his wife is the most insidious one, because the implications of such a strategy for actual battered wives tend to be ignored, as the reader becomes caught up in the joyous reconciliation between Yahweh and Israel. (Yee 1998, 211, 212)

Yee's feminist interpretation correlates the biblical poem with domestic violence, in which the husband and the male god are depicted as the violators of the wife, Israel. Yee also notices that "the imaging of God as male/husband becomes difficult when one forgets the metaphor God is *like* a husband and insists literally that God *is* a husband and therefore always male" (Yee 1998, 212). The feminist emphasis on the gendered and sexualized imagery discards nonfeminist approaches that sympathize with the dominant textual perspective. Feminist scholars thus read with the *female* character, inscribing her silenced position as valid and insisting on the problematic nature of the female–male relationship depicted in the poem. This kind of inscription of the gender binary is typical of feminist approaches as they recover, review, and empathize with the woman's perspective, sometimes employing historical arguments to fend off theological challenges to the divinity (e.g., Weems 1989, 1995) while engaging various perspectives and methods (e.g., Baumann 2003; Keefe 2001; Sherwood 1995, 1996; Wacker 1996).

More recently, some queer interpreters identify the ambiguities in the inscription of the female. They look "for breakdowns in the binary relationship of vehicle (bride/betrayed marriage) and tenor (male Israelites/broken covenant)" (Macwilliam 2011, 98). Observing the textual "confusion" about Hosea's and God's marriage, Stuart Macwilliam highlights the "gender slippage" in the poem (Macwilliam 2011, 99). He not only compares the male citizens of Israel to the woman but also finds feminine qualities in the description of the divinity. To Macwilliam, the gender division in Hosea's poem is more ambiguous than "feminist complaints" recognize (Macwilliam 2011, 98). His reading is thus contrary to

feminist approaches that stress God's identity as a husband violating his wife. Macwilliam refers especially to Hos 11 to highlight God's feminine and "parental tenderness towards Israel" as well as God's "torment and change of heart" (Macwilliam 2011, 100). In his view, God's femininity ought to help interpreters "throw off the habits of thinking along the old lines of binary opposition" (Macwilliam 2011, 100). In Macwilliam's queer reading, the inscription of God as having both genders enables God to escape the singular role of the violent husband because in other Hosea passages God appears as mother.

Other queer interpreters, such as Michael Carden, question the Hosea poem for its "insistence on ruthless monogamy and a morbidly patriarchal heterosexuality" (p. 305) (Carden 2006, 447). Carden's inscription of God as moving beyond such heteronormativity is supported in various ways. For instance, Carden asks whether "Gomer represents Israel, YHWH's wife, but is she YHWH's only wife? Where does Judah fit into this marital drama?" (Carden 2006, 447). In fact, according to Carden, the poem is even more problematic in light of Mic 4:2 and Zech 2:15 because both verses declare that other nations will also go up to the mountain of God and become God's people. Carden asks:

> If Gomer/Israel is promiscuous through attachment to Baal, what of YHWH's desire to be attached to all these other nations, in addition to Israel and Judah?…So perhaps YHWH is presented as a polygamous patriarch. (Carden 2006, 447)

In Carden's interpretation, God turns into a polyamorous deity looking to be in relationship with nations from across the world. Israel is only one wife among God's many other wives.

Carden is sober about the theological implications of his reading, suggesting that the "monogamous marriage metaphor for relationship with the divine cannot be sustained but collapses under a vision of divine promiscuity far in excess of what a patriarch or potentate could aspire to" (Carden 2006, 447). God loves too much, and so, according to Carden, the poem undermines "the morbid patriarchal heterosexuality" imposed on Gomer by Hosea and God in the poem (Carden 2006, 448). In Carden's interpretation, Yahweh is like Baal, preferring nonhierarchical relationships. This idea emerges in the second part of Hos 2, which includes terminology reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. There, the poem imagines "a new erotic community, that can only become reality by the abolition of patriarchal marriage and maybe even of marriage itself" (Carden 2006, 449). In Carden's queer reading, God's sex change from male to female appears in the "counter-voice" of Hos 11 and 14. The initial inscription of heteronormativity gives way to noninstitutionalized sexuality. "Marriage and gender categories" (Carden 2006, 452) collapse by the end of the biblical book, climaxing into the "ever increasing eroticism drawing on sacred marriage motifs" and even imagining "a sacred marriage of two males"—Ephraim/Israel and God in Hos 14:6–9 (Carden 2006, 455).

The ongoing interplay of inscribing and erasing gender and sexuality not only appears in feminist and queer readings of Hosea but also manifests in the "womanist and feminist reading" of the book of Nahum by Wilda C. M. Gafney (2017, 12). Characteristic of readings for gender and sexuality, her approach promises to "(1) examine the use of gender in

Nahum, (2) attempt to identify underlying female characters, and (3) pay particular attention to the ways in which actual and metaphorical female bodies are subject to human and divine violence" (Gafney 2017, 12). In her womanist-feminist reading Gafney observes, like many other feminist interpreters (e.g., Baumann 2005; O'Brien 2002), that the grammatically feminine city of Nineveh is inscribed as the "wholly 'other'" (Gafney 2017, 15). According to the prophetic rhetoric, the male-identified deity inflicts upon the city-woman an astonishing level of sexual violence. It reminds Gafney of the "spectacle lynching whose victim survived" as well as of "the disregard for the lives of whole populations in the present age" protested by the Black Lives Matters movement (Gafney 2017, 63). Gafney thus proclaims boldly that "Nahum's God is not the God of my (p. 306) ancestors" (Gafney 2017, 13) and also that "[t]he God who rapes is no God to me" (Gafney 2017, 64). She also acknowledges that "[a]s a black woman raised in the black church on stories of deliverance, I want God to defend and protect me against racism and sexual violence in every space in which I find myself. And in some cases, after the fact, I too want vengeance on an epic scale" (Gafney 2017, 63).

The imagined violence permeates the four chapters of the book, but the most explicit sexual violence occurs in Nah 3:1–19, where God is the rapist of the city-woman, Nineveh. Gafney states: "These words describing God instigating a sexual assault and calling others to join in are attributed to God and spoken in the first person by God in the text" (Gafney 2017, 52). In fact, another feminist interpreter, O'Brien, stresses that the entire book of Nahum is "permeated with patriarchy, but so is the culture in which I write and work and, perhaps more importantly, the self-image and values that I have internalized, the very things that often feel most 'normal' and 'natural'" (O'Brien 2002, 103). This "invisible fishbowl" needs to be "reassembled…in alternative, subversive ways" (O'Brien 2002, 104) so that the silence about Nineveh in prefeminist interpretations is broken and replaced with the rejection of imagined sexual violence executed by the male deity.

Womanist and feminist interpreters offer various strategies to deal with the theological problem of the book of Nahum. Gafney's solution is "to distinguish between the God of the (in the) text and God beyond the text" (Gafney 2017, 64). Similarly, Carden sees "no alternative but to condemn YHWH's character in Nahum and the text's relentless celebration of both sexual and other violence" (Carden 2006, 473). Feminist interpreter Gerlinde Baumann suggests that women cannot "count on the solidarity of this God" (Baumann 2012, 439), as the text itself is impossible to navigate for women readers. She explains: "The primary possibility for identification for women today in the text is with the former perpetrator Nineveh, not with the rehabilitated Judah. Thus 'perverted,' the text is distorted for women readers.…Male readers will experience the text differently if they assume the role, for example, of soldiers and therefore perpetrators, so that they can play out wishful revenge fantasies in reading the sexual violence scene" (Baumann 2012, 439). The inscription of gender onto God and the recovery of sexual violence in God's depiction create a serious theological dilemma for womanist, queer, and feminist readers.

In a discussion on the rhetoric of otherness in Nahum, O'Brien calls for resisting notions of the "Other" as monolithic and faceless. She acknowledges that building "into my own awareness the humanity of the oppressor [is] the best hedge I know against the risk of the ideological blindness that feeds the cycle of atrocity—the perpetual creation of a yet another faceless Other, ripe for annihilation" (O'Brien 2002, 147). Does she imagine God as the ultimate "Other"? One of the earliest feminist readings of Nahum, by Judith E. Sanderson, offers yet another approach to the theological problem in Nahum. Sanderson finds the prophet's rage understandable but also rejects the inscriptions of gender and sexual violence when she advises:

(p. 307)

> One can appreciate the anger Nahum expressed against the ruthless tyrant of his day and can appreciate his desire to use a metaphor that graphically expressed the biblical notion that God's punishment fits the crime in very appropriate ways. In today's world one must insist, however, that this anger and this concept of God's punishment be expressed in ways that do not demean women and women's sexuality and do not promote violence against women. It is dangerous enough that God is depicted as male while human beings are female. The danger is greatly compounded when God is depicted as a male who proves his manhood and superiority through violence and sexual retaliation against women. (Sanderson 1998, 236)

These and other feminist-womanist interpreters resist the theological image of God as a rapist for various reasons. They reject the troubling inscription of God's violence that some nonfeminist interpreters accept as an expression of national solidarity or value as artistic drama and aesthetic pleasure (O'Brien 2002, 106, 127–128). Feminist, queer, and womanist inscriptions of sexual violence trouble the theological position that the erasure of gender and sexuality in androcentric interpretations can be explained away as nationalistic or "primitive" discourse or appreciated as artistically beautiful poetry. Feminist, womanist, and queer interpreters contend that "Nahum shows no way out of violence" (Baumann 2012, 440).

Similar hermeneutical dynamics appear in other poetry in the Twelve, such as Amos 1:13; 4:1.11–12; 5:1–2; Joel 2:28 [Heb. 3:1]; Mic 1:7; 6:4; and Zech 2:6–12; 9:9. Feminist, womanist, and queer exegetes inscribe gender and sexuality into those texts to bring female images and characters to the forefront. What was invisible or marginal is made visible and theologically challenging, although the rhetoric of sexual difference that consists of more than the inscribed female presence, as poststructuralist thinkers advise, is not investigated in these studies.

An Unperturbed Andro-theistic Relationship Due to the Erasure of Gender and Sexuality?

Although the inscription of female images and women becomes visible in womanist, feminist, and queer interpretations, these readers struggle with the almost complete erasure of gender and sexuality in the Minor Prophets. Although feminist theorists have long recognized that sociopolitical categories such as gender, race, or class must be analyzed in intersectional ways and thus contribute to understanding structures of domination (Crenshaw 1989), a focus on gender and sexuality runs into a road block in the Minor Prophets. The Twelve therefore provide interesting terrain for following the traces of erasure.

(p. 308) Most of the Minor Prophets do not contain a hint of the female. As Fuchs notes, no female prophet is inscribed in the Twelve, with the five female prophets appearing only in Isaiah (8:3) and elsewhere (Exod 15:20; Judg 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:14; Neh 6:14).[1] Marie-Theres Wacker's comment about the inclination of feminist readers "to skip over" prophetic books such as Obadiah is revealing (Wacker 2012b, 409). She also notices in her comments on Amos that "[u]ntil now, however, feminist theologians and feminist biblical scholars have made little or no reference to this figure [Amos], and when they have, it has been linked to the objection that no matter how concrete Amos's critique is, he is incapable of taking notice of the real extent of miserable poverty of women in particular, while in his derisive poem to the rich Samaritan women, the 'cows of Bashan' (4:1–5), he vulgarly exaggerates the complicity of women" (Wacker 2012a, 397). As feminist, womanist, and queer readers search for gender and sexuality, the Minor Prophets offer almost no opportunity for inscriptions of the female. Women are mostly absent and the andro-theistic relationship of the monotheistic religion seems established and "unperturbed" (Fuchs 2001, 68).

Exegetes rely instead on masculinity studies to address the total erasure of the female in the Minor Prophets. The focus on the male and men affirms the absence of women. In her commentary on Haggai and Malachi, feminist interpreter Stacy Davis notes: "Haggai and Malachi both describe a hierarchy in which God, through designated male representatives, exercises power over other men. The priests and prophets speak; the masses should obey" (Davis 2015, xl–xli). The andro-theistic relationship establishes who enjoys power and authority and who is present, speaking, and in charge. On top of the hierarchy is the male God who gives orders to his male-identified followers. Masculinity studies ensure that the andro-theistic status is exposed, even though it cannot be subverted. The erasure of the female also shapes exegetical decisions about language, as Davis explains: "Precisely because of the questions Haggai and Malachi raise about masculinity, masculine language and male pronouns for God appear intentionally in this commentary" (Davis 2015, xli). As a result, her commentary refers to "LORD" and "He," and male-identified scholars populate the footnotes.

Do feminist-masculinity interpretations such as Davis's expose or reassert androcentric hegemony? To her credit, Davis states unambiguously that "a feminist interpretation of

Haggai should question the image of a deity that bankrupts other communities for a people's or the deity's sake.…Such language does not fit comfortably within an egalitarian feminist ideology" (Davis 2015, 21), and so feminism must move on without Haggai.

Davis sees more possibilities with Malachi when she explains:

> As father and master in Malachi, God demands obedience from his sons and slaves. They never grow up and become the father. And yet, they are men, who argue with each other about how to behave (or not). Heterarchy reveals—and my commentary explores—the tension between the expected obedience of earthly men to the divine "man," which the prophets articulate, as well as the resistance to that expectation.(Davis 2015, xli)

(p. 309) The dispute among the male characters provides clues for the discord among them. They fight with each other over who controls and who submits.

The interpretation of Rhiannon Graybill turns the tables on the erasure of the female. She observes that "[t]he male bodies of Hos 1–3 are almost absent; the female bodies, for their part are all too present" (Graybill 2016, 57). Graybill puts herself to the task of inscribing the erased male body into her interpretation and of examining the portrayal of the masculine body in this text. Since male prophets like Hosea use femininity to explore the connections between prophecy and masculinity, she views the female body in the poem as an articulation of masculine imaginary. She maintains that the female body "becomes an essential site for negotiating the problem of prophetic masculinity. Masculinity is at once wholly central to and largely excluded from the text of Hosea 1–3" (Graybill 2016, 52).

The entire passage articulates the dilemma of the male prophet wanting to be "open" to other gods and to "foreign influence" like woman Israel, but being aware of God's "punishment" for "the female-bodied Israel" (Graybill 2016, 57) the male prophet fears the "terrors" of God if he be open like her (Graybill 2016, 58). Graybill's reading places the "horror" of torture imagined in the text above "simple misogyny" (Graybill 2016, 59), stating that "[i]n Hosea 1 and 3, the violence against the female body is not explicit" (Graybill 2016, 62). Her position is problematic, as if there were an Olympics of violence: what is worse—rape or the torture of waterboarding? Surely the lack of explicit violence does not make the poem less violent. Graybill's observation that "[t]here is something queer in using the female body as the privileged ground to negotiate masculinity" (Graybill 2016, 52) remains, however, important, as the role of homoeroticism in patriarchal thought and practice has long been observed. Still, the acceptance of violence against women as an expression of status projections among men is not particularly new or innovative. Men often fight men by directing their homoerotic hostilities onto the female bodies around them. Perhaps this dynamic is the downside of male queerness in men when they use women "as the privileged ground to negotiate masculinity" (Graybill 2016, 52). Graybill recognizes the cost of this queer play, stating:

> If masculinity can be explored on and through bodies other than male bodies, then other configurations of masculinity may be possible. Perhaps the male body can even be queer. This possibility comes, however, at a cost for the female body.…It becomes a ground for negotiating masculinity at cost to itself. Still, treating Hosea 1–3 as an account of opened female bodies and masculine anxieties is a crucial step to understanding the working of masculinity in Hosea. (Graybill 2016, 52)

Graybill searches for masculinity in Hosea and other prophetic texts in order to understand "the working of masculinity." Her focus is on men and the male, though certainly with a theoretical twist, while the female remains erased within the masculine inscription. Clearly, after several decades of inscribing the female in the Minor Prophets, some interpreters—feminist, queer, and masculinity oriented—remain focused on the masculine in the Bible, including in the Minor Prophets.

(p. 310) Inscription and Erasure in Interpreting the Minor Prophets: A Conclusion

The conceptual framework of inscription and erasure exposes a range of possibilities for reading the Minor Prophets for gender and sexuality. Feminist, queer, and womanist exegetes often limit their attention to those prophetic texts whose androcentric, heteronormative, and female-suppressing ideologies are approvingly read by androcentric readers. As in the case of Hosea 1–3, womanist, queer, and feminist readers deconstruct those texts, depicting them as pornographic rhetoric with a highly problematic theological message. In their readings, the erasure of the female turns into the inscription of female subordination and sexual violence. The queer, womanist, and feminist theological dilemma is only remedied by stereotypically maternal and universalizing language in Hos 11 and elsewhere; the opposite situation applies to the book of Nahum, where God emerges as a rapist of the city-woman Nineveh. The inscription of gender and sexuality encourages feminist, womanist, and queer abandonment of the Bible, confirming Fuchs's thesis that the andro-theistic relationship articulated in the prophetic literature requires the elimination of the female to uphold monotheistic theology. Privileging texts in the Minor Prophets that do not mention gender and sexuality does not solve the hermeneutical challenges either. Interpreters who focus on masculine images and men in the Minor Prophets easily escape neither the androcentric grip of the prophetic texts nor their interpretative histories. The hegemony of the male is again at the front door of the exegetical enterprise in which the female is erased in the text and in the kind of questions masculinity-minded readers ask.

In sum, a mere emphasis on the female or the male does not suffice when exegetes read the Minor Prophets for gender and sexuality. Exegetes need to disrupt the inscription and erasure binary by exposing it as a pervasive strategy in biblical interpretation histories. Shall we then look for universal themes embedded in the Minor Prophets, such as God, social justice, or love? This kind of shift would merely rehash the personalized, privatized, and sentimentalized (PPS) hermeneutics so popular in our time. What we need are criti-

cal studies of variously located, theologically argued, and methodologically defined interpretations to expose the sociological patterns in the meaning-making interpretations of those who read the Minor Prophets. A sociologically oriented approach would also abandon the "hyperfetishization of the Bible" still so prevalent in biblical studies today (Wimbush 2017, xi). It will confirm that the inscription and the erasure of gender and sexuality in the biblical interpretation histories have significantly contributed to past and present misogyny, homophobia, and heteronormativity in their intersectional manifestations. The "naturalized" readerly willingness to tolerate and even expect masculine aggression, murder, and rape will be exposed as part of the rhetoric of sexual difference constructed in interpretations of the Minor Prophets throughout the centuries.

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Notes:

([1.]) In Ezek 13:17, the women are not described with the feminine version of the noun, "prophet" (*neviah*). Instead, a feminine plural participle in the hitpael describes their activity ("those women who prophesy").

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Race and Intersectionality in Study of the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

Because race is a modern and problematic category, this essay focuses on ethnicity, as interpreted through the lense of intersectionalilty. Key texts in the Minor Prophets, particularly the oracles against the nations, reveal the connections among religion, politics, and skin color. Other nations must be destroyed or assimilated, but they cannot be allowed to exist independently. Differences in color, religious practices, and/or political ideology indicate the inferior nature of non-Israelites. After paying particular attention to the pre-exilic books of Amos, Hosea, Nahum, and Zephaniah and the postexilic books of Zechariah and Joel, the essay concludes that more analysis of prophetic ethnocentrism is needed.

Keywords: intersectionality, race, ethnicity, oracles, ethnocentrism, Minor Prophets

WRITING about race and intersectionality in the Minor Prophets pushes the scholar into a linguistic and historical maze. Some scholars argue that race as a concept did not appear in the ancient world, yet the prophets refer to skin color. Similarly, many argue that ethnicity is a modern construct with no relevance to the Minor Prophets, yet the canon often describes non-Israelites in negative terms, with groups like the Egyptians and the Assyrians condemned for their oppressive misuse of power. While race is a modern construct, ethnicity is not, and neglecting the passages that talk about ethnicity results in an incomplete analysis of the Minor Prophets. Texts such as the Oracles against the Nations receive little scholarly attention, even though they make arguments and assumptions about the intersections among color, religion, and nationalism.

Intersectionality, a term created by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw and now a foundational element in feminist theory, came out of the struggles of African American women in workplace discrimination lawsuits; their ill treatment due to race and gender received no legal recourse, "because the court believed that black women should not be permitted to combine their race and gender claims into one" (2015). Reflecting on the term nearly thirty years after its birth, Crenshaw writes, "Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power [but] intersectionality alone

cannot bring invisible bodies into view" (2015). Since the bodies of non-Israelites in the Minor Prophets have often been overlooked, focusing on these passages fills a scholarly gap and sheds light on how Israelite prophets used color and ethnicity as a way to privilege their people and disparage the people around then. In that sense, the modern concepts of identity politics and ethnic bias have ancient roots.

(p. 314) Terminology

To apply an intersectional analysis to the Minor Prophets, one should begin by clarifying what identity markers will and will not be utilized. I will not use the term "race" because its modern origins make it a challenging concept to apply to ancient texts. Benjamin Isaac's *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (2004) argues that Greco-Roman bias functioned as a precursor to racism. After reading primary texts, classical bias against other ethnic groups cannot be disputed, but racism remains a problematic term because of its connection to a now outdated anthropology that classified people based on color and facial features and placed them on an intellectual and moral hierarchy. The rise of scientific racism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave additional weight to pro-slavery arguments in the antebellum South of the United States and to the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany. Claiming that some groups were naturally inferior justified the social control of those groups by the superior white race. While racism still exists, the theory of race that underpinned it does not; therefore, it may be complicated to use the term "race" to describe people in biblical texts even though the term can be used more generically to describe a kinship group with a common ethnic heritage.

The term "ethnicity," while not problem-free, may be the better term when discussing the peoples of the Minor Prophets. Norman Gottwald describes ethnicity studies as follows:

> A frequent motif of these studies is the rejection of a simplistic biological/genetic explanation of ethnicity in favor of a more supple cultural historical viewpoint…another leitmotif in ethnicity studies is an emphasis on the importance of outside attributions of ethnic distinctiveness (often intended as derisory stigmatizations), which are sometimes crucial in establishing an abiding sense of ethnic distinctiveness among a people who might otherwise have not thought of themselves as being a particularly distinct community in the first place. (Gottwald 2007, 29)

He argues, however, that one should not talk of ancient Near Eastern ethnic groups because common people probably did not see themselves as part of a larger group (Gottwald 2007, 30). Gottwald makes an excellent point; in the Minor Prophets, for example, only a select few had the authority and privilege of classifying themselves and others. Nevertheless, such classification, even if done only by elites, still occurred. If the groups cannot be defined as ethnic ones, then the alternative becomes unclear. Joel S. Kaminsky notes that while few non-Israelite groups were designated as irredeemable in the Hebrew Bible, "most texts that affirm Israel's elect status view the vast majority of foreign individuals and nations as members of the 'non-elect'" (2011, 18). Because these nonelect

groups had different religious beliefs than the Israelites, they fit one of the criteria for ethnic groups.

Intersectional analysis enhances prophetic descriptions of Israelites and non-Israelites. Combining intersectionality with Jerome Clayton Ross's hermeneutics of (p. 315) "*contextualization under the auspices of minority sensitivity*" should yield readings of the Minor Prophets that do not exclusively come from an Israelite perspective (2010, 208). Ross "[proposes] 'minority sensitivity' as opposed to Afrocentricity and color consciousness, disregarding the category of 'race' as a superimposition upon biblical interpretation by those who are racists—blatant or recovering—and dismissing it as a postbiblical, Eurocentric, and North American-appropriated construct, foreign to biblical times" (2010, 208). The Minor Prophets have particular historical and social contexts. How people were categorized and judged depended upon religion, politics, social class, nationalism, color, and occasionally gender.

Regarding ethnicity and color, scholars have focused primarily on Zephaniah, especially the possible identification of the prophet as a Cushite. The Oracles against the Nations have received less attention, but they have much to offer regarding how Israelites defined themselves and others. Why did prophets condemn other nations, and what does the condemnation say about definitions of ethnicity between the eighth and fifth centuries BCE? An examination of the pre-exilic books of Amos, Hosea, Nahum, and Zephaniah and the postexilic books of Zechariah and Joel offers preliminary answers to these questions.

Amos

The book of Amos begins with oracles against Aram, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab (1:2–2:3); with the exception of Moab, each community will be punished for mistreating Israel. The Arameans abused those in Gilead, so they will face destruction and exile. The Philistines turned Israelites over to Edom, so death "to the last man" will be their lot (1:8; unless otherwise stated, all translations are from the NJPS). In both cases, the nations who cause Israel to suffer will suffer themselves, but the prophet offers no moral commentary on their deed. The oracles against Tyre and Edom are different. While the Phoenicians also turned Israelites over to Edom, they are guilty of "ignoring the covenant of brotherhood" (1:9). The prophet sees them as having a greater obligation to the Israelites, and failure to meet that obligation will cause Tyre to be burned down. The Edomites' crime is as follows: "Because he pursued his brother with the sword and repressed all pity, because his anger raged unceasing and his fury stormed unchecked" (1:11). Edom, although technically a separate nation, is too closely related to Israel to be treated as enemy; therefore, its property will be burned beyond salvaging. The Ammonites killed pregnant women for expansionist purposes, so for their mistreatment of the innocent, they will face destruction and exile. The Moabite oracle is the most unusual, because the prophet predicts fire and death for Moab's killing of Edom's king. Edom may be heartless and wrathful, but apparently Moab does not have the right to destroy its leader. Certain ethical lines cannot be crossed without consequence, even among

the already suspect nations. Moab's territorial ambitions placed nationalism over human kindness, and the prophet calls for its punishment as a result.

(p. 316) Because of the intersections of nationalist agendas, ethnic conflicts, and political ambitions, scholars have focused on the historical context and ethical implications of the oracles in Amos. Keith N. Schoville argues that war is the backdrop for Amos's words. The people exiled to Gaza and Tyre were war captives, and Tyre and Edom committed the additional acts of treaty violations (Schoville 1974, 57–58, 60–61). While the oracles describe "the offense of a broken treaty and the crime of man-stealing," the acts themselves also predate the prophet by about a century, as a response to King Jehu, who broke an earlier peace between Israel and its neighbor (Schoville 1974, 61, 63). If this is the case, then the prophet fails to mention Israel's initial behavior and makes the nations seem excessively harsh. Regarding the oracles against Tyre, John T. Strong claims an early sixth-century date. The city remained neutral during Judah's revolt and failed to defend the people against Edom (Strong 1997, 207–219).

If the oracles' dates are in dispute, so is their content precisely because of their context. Because Israel appears to be at war with the surrounding peoples, the oracles may not be describing crimes but instead the nasty consequences of military conflict (Wazana 2013, 479, 483). As Wazana writes, "The deeds that Amos vehemently condemns were common acts mentioned in other sources, biblical and extrabiblical, with no reservation! On the contrary, acts of great cruelty during war were considered legitimate and were even celebrated as they depicted military greatness and thus God's will" (2013, 491). This makes the prophet's critique unusual in context (2013, 500–501), but it also means that the nations described are not necessarily "bad." Instead, they are products of their ancient Near Eastern environment, regardless of the oracles' dates.

Amos 9:7 gives a direct and unfavorable comparison of Israel to other nations. The prophet declares, "To me, O Israelites, you are just like the Ethiopians—declares the LORD. True, I brought Israel up from the land of Egypt, but also the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir." The verse implies that Israel's claim to distinctiveness must be mitigated since God also redeemed Philistia and Aram. As Effien Koffi notes, however, some study Bibles have focused on the reference to Ethiopia with troublesome results. He argues,

> As a rule of thumb, when a character is mentioned in the Bible and when that person is described as an Ethiopian, if the reference is positive, then translators and study Bible authors will resort to translation techniques or exegetical interpretations to cast doubt on the person's identity. However, if the reference is perceived as negative, every available means will be used to emphasize that the person in question is black, even if skin color is not the element in focus. (Koffi 2001–2005, 160)

While the 1990 *Catholic Study Bible* and the NRSV translation do not fall into this trap, the 1995 *NIV Study Bible* links Amos 9:7 to Jer 13:23, which focuses upon the Ethiopians' skin color. A 1995 Spanish edition of the Bible describes the Ethiopians as a lower-status

people because of skin color and occupation (Koffi 2001–2005, 161–162). The text in Amos says none of this. Modern assumptions or stereotypes about color are read into an ancient passage without context or cause. This will be an issue in commentary on other prophetic books, particularly Zephaniah.

(p. 317) Hosea

Hosea reserves most of its criticism for Egypt and Assyria, primarily because of eighth-century BCE politics. The prophet's opposition to political alliances leads to a negative assessment of powerful countries. Assyria cannot save Israel (Hos 5:13, 8:9), and thinking that either Assyria or Egypt can do so is the response of "a silly dove with no mind" (7:11/12:1 [Heb. 12:2]). As a result of such misguided thinking, "Ephraim shall return to Egypt and shall eat unclean food in Assyria" (9:3//11:5). The food cannot be blessed or offered to God, so it will defile the Israelites (9:4). Since the Assyrians do not worship God, they and their possessions are unclean; the critique here is more religious than national. Those who end up in Egypt will die there (9:6). The prophet does not directly pass judgment on Egypt and Assyria as foreign countries, but the absence of God makes the lands a negative place for Israel.

Nahum

As an anti-Assyrian and specifically anti-Ninevite text, Nahum uses the oracle to criticize the ethnicity and masculinity of Israel's enemy, while praising those who attack the city. Nineveh's conquerors carry red shields and wear red clothing; they are swift and strong men (2:3–5 [Heb. 2:4–6]). While Nah 2:5 (Heb. 2:6) presents multiple translation challenges, the verse implies that the strong men are preparing to destroy the city wall. Consequently, the Ninevites' physical appearance literally changes—"and their faces gather *parur*" (2:10 [Heb. 2:11], author's translation). Difficult to translate, *parur* appears only here and in Joel 2:6, with a similar context. Julius Wellhausen thought it meant "glow"; Abraham ibn Ezra argued for pale, which most translations utilize (Brown-Driver-Briggs 1996, 802–803). Koehler and Baumgartner state that the word is associated with a red face, so either one's face flushes or it loses redness and becomes pale (2001, 909). The BDB Lexicon concludes, "[it is] all very uncertain" (1996, 803). What is certain is that the Ninevite men are so afraid that it shows on their faces. Anselm C. Hagedorn notes that Nah 2:10 (Heb. 1:11) exemplifies difference as superiority; the group with the *parur* faces lacks the status of the men in red (2006, 239). Like Thebes, whose allies Nubia, Egypt, Put, and Libya failed her (3:8–9), Assyria's army has become equally useless. "Truly," the prophet says, "the troops within you are women" (Nah 3:13). Julia M. O'Brien states, "The taunt of Nineveh in 3:8–12 compares her to another humiliated female character: Thebes, a well-defended Egyptian city conquered by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in 666 B.C.E." (2004, 53). Wilda C. M. Gafney adds to the argument. Calling the troops "women" means "Nineveh's now feminized men are as vulnerable to rape as her women and Nineveh herself. In the poet's oratory the 'gates' of Nineveh's men and women are 'wide

open' for their enemies to enter as easily as their enemies enter their city gates" (2017, 58). Since the men are not manly, they and everyone else are subject to assault.

(p. 318) The author justifies the mockery of the discolored and emasculated Ninevites by claiming that they have mistreated everyone and now deserve what they get (3:19). Likely writing in the shadow of the northern kingdom's fall, the writer may have had a deeply personal reason for the mockery. O'Brien writes, "At the very least, recognizing the cultural assumptions of ancient Israel may help our contemporary readers recognize their own. It is not only in the book of Nahum that anger burns away 'polite' facades of civility to expose the bedrock of assumptions about women (and minorities and all 'others'), mediated through slurs and fantasies of others' suffering" (2004, 55). Who we demonize and how says more about us than about them.

Zephaniah

The book of Zephaniah has received the most amount of scholarly attention regarding skin color and ethnicity because of the prophet's identity as "son of Cushi" (1:1). Ehud ben Zvi argues that Cushi is a proper name with no reference to Cushites or Ethiopians (2014, 1224). Julia M. O'Brien says that whether Zephaniah was ethnically African remains unclear (2004, 96). Jin Hee Han writes that the prophet could be of African descent (2014, 899), while Charles B. Copher concludes, "At least one of the Old Testament prophets was a black man" (1991, 161). The debate shows no sign of ending.

In his argument for Cushite presence in Egypt and occasional interaction between Cushites and Israelites (and also Assyrians), Roger W. Anderson exemplifies the problematic nature of discussions about the people's color (1995, 61, 63–65). Regarding Zeph 1:1, "The identification of the Cushi is unknown, although Bentzen suggested he was a temple slave…he states that Cushi was a Negro, perhaps from a slave family. However, he does not suggest the same interpretation for other occurrences of Cushi" (1995, 54). The Bentzen to whom Anderson refers wrote in 1949; his assumption that Cushi is a "Negro" and possibly a slave may be reading pre–civil rights race relations in the United States into a seventh-century BCE Israelite text.

Anderson points out that many scholars either avoid the issues of race and ethnicity in the ancient Near East or suggest everyone was white, which creates a type of color and social stratification when scholars discuss the ancient world. He notes, "The black Cushites and other 'black-headed' and 'burnt-skinned' people mentioned in the Egyptian texts are often relegated to inferior positions or neglected altogether. The effect of mixing populations through contact and intermarriage must surely have produced a population which was varied and diverse—not a homogeneous nation of one pure race" (1995, 65). While Cushites were probably black, they also had similar facial features to Egyptians in iconography. Anderson concludes, "The mixing of races, as we would call it, seems to be less of a problem in the ancient world than today" (1995, 69). His conclusion is problematic, however, because if Cushites and Egyptians were from neighboring geographical regions, then races were not mixing. Clearly, even those who clearly have (p. 319) an anti-

racist agenda struggle with Zephaniah's name. Miscegenation was (and still is for some people) a modern concern.

Writing a generation later than Anderson, Wilda C. M. Gafney notes the ambiguity of Zeph 1:1 and the ways in which the verse often serves nonbiblical agendas. While Cushites were presumed to have darker skin than those around them, Zephaniah ben Cushi has no definite article; therefore, Gafney thinks Cushi is a personal name. This does not exclude the possibility, however, that Zephaniah and his father were Cushites. Since Israelites were not a single ethnic group, Cushi could be a family name referring to Cushite relatives, perhaps from Zephaniah's maternal line (2017, 130–133). Gafney's assessment of interpretations of Zeph 1:1 is worth hearing in full:

> Speculation about the name, origin, race, and ethnicity of…Cushi reveals much about the assumptions and understanding of race that shape biblical scholars and our scholarship.…Interpretations that presume the name Cushi and its association with African lands and people were perceived negatively in biblical texts derive from postbiblical constructions of race, valorization of whiteness, and demonization and othering of blackness.…Similarly, readings that presume a binary in which the name Cushi signals Cushite, Nubian, heritage over against Israelite identity are equally products of a world in which identity is racialized, in which whiteness is postulated as normative and the ideal against which others are identified. (2017, 131, 132)

In the biblical text, Zephaniah son of Cushi appears without comment; this is simply the Israelite prophet's name, and if he was dark-skinned with African ancestors these characteristics were not considered noteworthy. The commentary surrounding Cushi may be a consequence of later references to Cush in Zephaniah, but the prophet himself does not see his possible color or ancestry as impediments to condemning all other nations. He identifies first and foremost as an Israelite.

Zephaniah's Israelite identity results in prophecies critical of non-Israelites. According to Zeph 1:8, God will punish all Israelites who wear non-Israelite clothing. O'Brien notes, "The description of the royal court as clothed in 'foreign vestments' supports the impression that, throughout, the passage is lambasting those who have incorporated into their daily lives ideas and practices brought from outside the community" (2004, 103). The prophet's insistence upon religious segregation is dependent upon political "independence from Assyria" (2004, 104), which historically only happened when Babylon conquered Assyria. Zephaniah opposes foreign contact and foreign peoples in general. Assyria will be demolished (Zeph 2:13–15). God will destroy the Moabites and Ammonites for making fun of the Israelites (2:8–11). The Cushites will be destroyed as well (2:12), although the prophet gives no explanation for their demise. If Zephaniah's ancestors came from Cush, that does not mitigate his prophecy or change his self-understanding as an Israelite. There is no sense of intersectionality, multiculturalism, or overlapping identities. Regardless of possible phenotype, Zephaniah allies himself only with his Israelite heritage.

(p. 320) Complicating the anti-Cushite oracle in chapter 2 is Zeph 3:10, a verse difficult to translate and understand: “From the region beyond the rivers of Cush, my suppliants, daughter of the dispersed, will bring gifts to me” (author’s translation). The Hebrew raises two interlocking questions—who are the suppliants and who are the dispersed women? In context, they may be Israelites, since the next verse seems to refer to a cleansed Israel. Such an identification is not guaranteed, however, because in 3:9 all peoples will be compelled to worship God. Zephaniah limits God’s favor to those who follow God properly; non-Israelites eventually must follow that program if they want to survive. As Dora Rudo Mbuwayesango writes, “The fate of all these nations is total destruction. The lack of interest for the wellbeing of foreign peoples is striking” (2010, 203). At a minimum, the ancient text does not exemplify the modern concept of tolerance.

Zechariah

Zechariah has little discussion of ethnicity, except that “a mongrel people” (*mamzer*) will live in Philistia after its destruction (9:6). This people, after being cleansed from its nonkosher diet, will become God’s people (9:7). *Mamzer* only appears elsewhere in Deut 23:3, which implies that the people are products of incest and cannot become part of God’s people. Susan Niditch notes that those who eat blood and unclean foods are “the culturally and ethnically Other” (2011, 635). Zechariah 9:6, then, implies that God will remove these from the status of Other. The text concludes that the removal will make the people like Israelites (Niditch 2011, 641), without concern for their own wishes. Ethnocentrism assumes that one people’s perspective is the measuring standard for all other peoples. The *mamzer*, judged because of their nonkosher eating habits, cannot be left to eat blood in a foreign land in peace. Instead, they must be assimilated.

Joel

Joel follows a similar pattern as Nahum. The prophet uses color imagery to describe people; only the people are Israelites and not foreigners. Faced with a massive locust plague, “all faces gather *parur*” (Joel 2:6; author’s translation). Whether the faces turn pale or beet red, the change in color signifies trouble. Once God removes the locusts, however, God will punish other nations. For enslaving the Israelites to the Greeks, the Phoenicians will become slaves themselves (3:4–8 [Heb. 4:4–8]). Egypt and Edom will be destroyed for killing Israelites in Israelite territory (3:19 [Heb. 4:19]). The Minor Prophets’ assessment of ethnicity ends as it begins—with other nations being judged by Israel’s God.

(p. 321) Conclusion

In biblical studies, at least since Wellhausen’s time, the prophets have been praised for their ethical standards, including caring for the vulnerable and not exploiting one’s community. Perhaps or because of this, the oracles against the nations do not receive as much commentary. Since the texts are written from an Israelite point of view, scholars often

read from that perspective as opposed to a broader ancient near Eastern one. Reading against the texts, however, can reveal bias that complicates blanket praise of the books. While the prophets should not be dismissed because of that bias, the desired ethnocentric violence against other nations should not be ignored. The books are products of their environments. Looking at the challenging passages more closely can enhance scholarly discussions and expand assessments of the texts.

I end with important questions for the future directions of intersectional studies of the Minor Prophets. How will archaeology and comparative religious studies, for example, influence interpretation of the oracles against the nations? In what ways do the politics of the ancient Near East shape or misshape prophetic analysis of other nations? How does the development of the theory of divine retribution and monotheism affect prophetic views of other nations? What additional intersectional work could be done with the books of Hosea, Zechariah, and Joel? What would a history of interpretation of the oracles against the nations reveal about the use of race in biblical studies?

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Historical Economics and the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay calls for a thorough reassessment of economics and the Minor Prophets. Since existing economic models based on both Marxism or (Neo-) liberalism are problematic as are many basic economic concepts, new theorizing based on ancient data is necessary. Taking Bourdieu's "economic field" as a starting frame, this essay considers the material elements of production and consumption in the ancient southern Levant, their patterns and social structures, and some issues in the socioeconomic world of the Minor Prophets. These then raise new questions for sample prophetic passages (Amos, Joel, Haggai, Micah, and Zechariah). The essay points to some issues these considerations raise for analyzing the famous calls for social justice, and it closes by pointing in some potential directions for improved theoretical models in future research.

Keywords: economics, economic sociology, Minor Prophets, Southern Levant, production, consumption, wealth, temple, greed, markets

NO comprehensive understanding of the Minor Prophets is possible without a consideration of the economic contexts from which they derive—whether those of the purported prophets or their scribal immortalizers.[1] The topic first requires assessing the nature of ancient economies and models for historical economics. This then raises new questions for the reconstruction of the worlds of the texts and, lastly, for contextualizing their famous calls for social justice. All three topics are vastly more complicated than they appear at first glance. There is ample scope for future work.

The Economics of the Ancient Southern Levant

> "Hear this word, you cows of the Bashan, who on the mount of Samaria are extorting the poor and bruising the needy, who say to their lords, bring, and let us drink! (Amos 4:1)."

This famous socioeconomic epithet has gained much attention as a critique of economic exploitation. A specific interpretation, however, requires an understanding of the structure of the economy behind this accusation generally, and the role of gender within the economy more specifically. On these points, there is no consensus.

(p. 324) On Divergent Economic Models

In general terms, models of the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) and Mediterranean economies have followed two main traditions: Marxist and neoclassical.[2] Marxist approaches emphasize the role of modes of production, class-based exploitation and the ideologies that allow them to persist (most recently, Boer 2015). Models based on classical economics tend to focus on markets, trade, and growth (Pirngruber 2017; Miller 2015 only discusses markets in his overview of methods). The trend within the latter model has been to appeal to so-called new institutional economics (NIE) to understand the economy within social and political "institutions."[3]

Neither approach to economics is immune to criticism, as both are reductionist in their own peculiar ways. Marxism places undue emphasis on material production (tied with a secularized eschatology) as determinative, while so-called classical economics envisions a strangely autonomous set of "rational" economic actors. Social scientists have been aware of the problems of classical economics for quite some time (see Smelser and Swedberg 2005; Graeber 2011). Modern economists are increasingly addressing such problems, though their work has not yet affected studies of the ANE.[4] Importantly, scholars sometimes assume their respective models more for ideological than evidential reasons.[5] While the (minor) prophets are often recognized as promoting ideologies in their own right, the implicit ideologies of the economic models used for analyzing them are not always similarly ferreted out before application.[6]

A more promising way forward would interrogate the insights of economic sociology and anthropology along with those of economics. These disciplines demonstrate the fallacies of the assumptions of classical economic theory concerning actors, action, rationality, motivation, and power dynamics (Smelser and Swedberg 2005, 4–6). More broadly, they insist that one "must *combine the analysis of economic interests with an analysis of social relations*" (Smelser and Swedberg 2005, 7; italics theirs). As noted earlier, recent studies of the ancient economy have addressed some of these concerns with social and political contexts by appealing to NIE. According to Manning, NIE's key concepts are transaction costs, property rights, methodological individualism, bounded rational choice, and cost of information (Manning 2018, 28). This approach retains the problems of classical economics despite a slight window dressing of sociological lingo.

Related to the issue of problematic assumptions inherent in economic theories are unstated value judgments. Economic analyses often conflate description and valuation. For example, "economic growth" is widely utilized and accepted as a valuable goal, even though the idea is based on an arbitrary selection of "production," itself based on an arbitrary understanding of "work" (e.g., Grint 1994; Abbott 2005), and both are predicated on valu-

ing increased “surplus value.” Household and cultural work, for example, has not been adequately integrated into economic analyses.[7] Because implicit valuations affect both Marxist and classical economics, future research should question *all* concepts and models used in analyses of the ancient economies—whether ultimately deriving from Marxist or classical traditions.

(p. 325) A fruitful analytic framework could be Bourdieu’s understanding of economics as a “field” comprising production and consumption (Bourdieu 2005; 1991, 215). Rather than understanding this field as inherently related to efficiency as is typical for classical economics, however, one could see it in terms of *weal*, the etymological origin of the English word “wealth.” In other words, economic actors strive toward the well-being of themselves, their families, and their communities as they subjectively understand well-being, regardless of whether from another perspective one might consider their actions wise, efficient, or even in their own self-interest.[8] They do so, however, within a field not of their own choosing but which they continually shape through their actions. If one takes this as the framework for economics, then one needs to understand the material elements of production and consumption, the pattern or structure of both, and the practices these involve. One needs to analyze both physical constraints—the environment and the need to eat—along with the particular social and political understandings and negotiations of those constraints and the values which the relevant parties valued.[9] It is important to try to distinguish our value judgments from descriptive analysis, as impossible as that ultimately may be.[10]

It may be misleading to speak of *the* ancient (Levantine) economy. Marxist scholarship has seen a sharp “class” divide between “peasants” and “elites,” a framework that would require one to reckon with at least two separate but interrelated economies within the same society: one for the peasantry, and one for the “elite.” Wolf describes four “funds” of peasant production and consumption: subsistence, replacement, ceremonial, and rent (Wolf 1966, 4–10). Kautsky (1982) sees the “aristocratic” economy as primarily based in taxation and warfare, yet he allows for a range of “derivative leisure classes” that muddy the waters. Boer assumes that the only relation between these two classes was parasitical, the common description of historical crises being only the perspective of the ruling class (Boer 2015, 195–202). This assumes all surplus was taken by nonagricultural producers, leaving no provisions for bad years (Boer 2015, 199), a situation that is by no means certain: administrations also provided the means for mass storing and importation of foodstuffs in lean years.[11] Assessing this requires evaluating the “social good” and how things called “social welfare” in modern economies were managed in the ANE.[12]

An economic divide between elites and peasants is not the only way the ANE economy has been differentiated. Faust argues for a distinction between “private,” “lineage,” and “state” economies (Faust 2011, 269). Jursa (2010) and Altmann (2016, 113) speak of temple, royal, and private sectors. Determining whether a stark divide between “peasants” and “elites” or other types of differentiation existed in the southern Levantine economy requires deeper research into the social structure.

Gender roles are another key issue requiring differential economic analysis. Classical economics has traditionally overlooked the work performed by women in the home (visible in the modern shift of women from household to extra-household work but invisible in studies of classical GDP, e.g., England and Folbre 2005, 627–628; Abbott 2005, 307). Since households were a major locus of both production and consumption, household gender roles are a major factor in understanding who did what and who consumed what (p. 326) (Meyers 1988; Bird 1997, 67–78).[13] Further, in certain contexts, ANE women were major economic actors outside the household, running their own estates and businesses (e.g., Stol 2016; Irwin 2012, 240–241). Both the household and the wider public were venues for male actors as well; the economies were gendered in all categories.

The old adage that the only certainties in life are death and taxes also holds true for the ANE, even though the way in which taxes were collected, used, and conceptualized still requires clarification. Taxes can be differentiated among a variety of types, including direct and indirect, formal and informal, regular or irregular, and be due in kind, labor, and/or specie.[14] While there has been debate over the effects of taxation, particularly the effects of so-called monetization, the social ramifications deserve deeper analysis—and these directly impact one's reading of the Minor Prophets.

The densest collection of primary sources for the first millennium consists of the various kinds of contracts and promissory notes from Babylonia, but the Hellenistic period includes price data in the astronomical diaries. For the southern Levant such archival sources are much more limited. These include the (mostly unprovenanced) Idumean ostraca (late Persian/early Hellenistic), the Wadi ed-Daliyeh papyri (late Persian), and the Zenon papyri (Ptolemaic).

Material Elements of Production and Consumption in the Southern Levant

In all relevant periods, the primary subsistence production in the southern Levant was dry agriculture and pastoralism (mostly sheep and goats) (Feliks and Gibson 2007; Boer 2015, 53–81). The region largely shared the so-called Mediterranean triad of grain, grapes (wine), and olives (oil) as key crops but also produced legumes, spices, figs, dates, pomegranates, nuts, and vegetables. Animals provided food (milk, meat), materials (wool, hides, bones), and labor. The climate allowed for two harvest cycles: spring and autumn.

The Dead Sea basin also produced a few very expensive products: balsam, bitumen, and salt. Balsam plantations at Jericho and Ein Gedi were so profitable that Cleopatra and Herod competed for them (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.4.2, 4; perhaps Ezek 27:17). Because balsam has not yet been identified in archaeobotanic investigations, its economic importance prior to literary references in the Roman era is hard to assess. Limited evidence for use of Dead Sea salt and bitumen has been found, though it is uncertain how early and in what quantities (Nissenbaum 1993, 129–134; 137–138).

Unlike in Mesopotamia, various types of stone (including limestone, sandstone, and basalt) were locally available. Copper mines were known in nearby Edom, but other (luxury) products such as cedar and incense had to be imported, as was fish (Van Neer et al. 2004). Even in the analysis of “staple” and “luxury” goods, it is important to notice that such categories are culturally defined—what one culture (or class) deems a luxury could be considered a necessity elsewhere.

(p. 327) Patterns and Structures of Production and Consumption in the Southern Levant

Scholars have characterized the southern Levant with a variety of socioeconomic models. For Judah and Israel, more work has focused on the monarchies than the periods after 587 BCE. Weber famously described post-587 BCE “Late Judaism” as a confessional community tending toward sectarianism (Weber 1967, 356–382); since his scheme is a retrojection of later developments, biblical scholars have tended to appeal instead to some form of his patrimonial model (Weber 2013, 1006–1068).[15] Polanyi’s distinctions between the economic modes of reciprocity, redistribution, and market exchange have provided endless debates in ANE economics.[16] The Levant is often characterized as an example of Lenski’s “Advanced Agrarian Economy,”[17] but this model mistakenly emphasizes unemployment rather than labor shortages (e.g., Stolper 2003). Houston compares four models he calls rent capitalism, “ancient class” society (essentially models based on the Greco-Roman world), tributary state (a revised Asiatic mode of production), and patronage (Houston 2008, 26–48). Boer has proposed describing the ancient economy in terms of basic institutional forms, economic regimes, and modes of production (Boer 2015, 1). Jursa has offered a model for first-millennium Babylonia that he calls a “commercialism model,” one that tries to consider demographics, class and property relations, and commercialization together (Jursa 2010, 16–45; see summary in Jursa 2015. Quite a few recent studies base their theories on NIE, though with a variety of emphases (e.g., Altmann 2016; Pirgruber 2017; Manning 2018). A more robust understanding needs to integrate an assessment of changes in socioeconomic structure in the long period that the Minor Prophets were written and redacted.

Households were significant loci of production: agriculture but also textiles, pottery, oil, and even smithery (Meyers 1988, 122–164; Ebeling 2010). Education was primarily also within the household, archetypically from parent to child. Both nuclear and extended family households are probable, though the archaeology does not clearly indicate whether houses and compounds should be interpreted as residences of nuclear families, extended families, and/or “clans” nor whether there is any broader pattern between urban and rural sites or time periods (compare the discussion in Schloen 2001, 101–185 with essays in Yasur-Landau, Ebeling, and Mazow 2011). It is periodically stated that “imperialism” broke down kinship structures (Bedford 2007, 323; Houston 2008, 50; Schloen 2001, 52, 64, 135), though precise details concerning such change are harder to determine. Gender roles and relations are a key variable in economic analysis here, too (e.g., Meyers 1988; Ebeling 2010).

The role, nature, and size of estates—larger land rights with subordinate users—in the southern Levant are uncertain. While it is likely that the native monarchies and later empires had some royal and aristocratic estates in the region, there is no evidence to support a narrative of a continual growth in estates leading to the elimination of free, small farmers (contrast Guillaume 2012 with O'Brien 2015, 22–23). (p. 328) Nested hierarchies of land rights and obligations were common and could vary considerably, and these no doubt existed in various forms; without archival documents, such structures are hard to detect (for the evidence from nearby Idumea, see Edelman 2015).

Another common distinction often made is between urban and rural life (Liverani [1988] 2013, 62–64; Houston 2008). There is no doubt that cities and villages can have distinctive social and economic practices, yet in the southern Levant for most of the periods relevant for the Minor Prophets, the settlement sizes are not so disparate to make such distinctions obviously significant (for the generally tiny settlement size in the Persian era, see Edelman 2007; O'Brien 2015, 8).

Economic Practices in the Southern Levant

Important economic practices coexisted within the aforementioned environment and structure; only a few key practices can be mentioned here. Several of the patterns discussed earlier are themselves economic practices: subsistence agriculture (for more details, see Feliks and Gibson 2007), pastoralism (whether sedentary or [semi-]nomadic), and patrimonial household patterns.

A number of scholars have pointed to the importance of patron–client relations for political, social, and economic ramifications (Houston 2008, 44–48; Guillaume 2012, 150–165; Boer 2015, 82–109). These overlap with most other practices and structures, both village-level communal cooperation and more hierarchical estate-type systems (themselves not mutually exclusive). Patron–client relations are also intimately tied with two key economic practices: land tenure and debt. The former describes not only the relationship of the population to the primary agricultural "means of production" but also the social system built around it. The same is true for debt. While the interest rate for agricultural loans in the first millennium is often claimed to have been punitive ("average" was 20 percent), one must recognize that the lack of compound interest and possibilities for interest-free loans and debt forgiveness means that, in practice, these rates are much less draconian than many modern loans.[18] The debates around these two terms demonstrate their complexity and importance for analysis (see Graeber 2011; Guillaume 2012; Boer 2015).

A widespread set of practices was involuntary labor. ANE scholarship has been obsessed with the issue of slavery, which existed but not as extensively as sometimes claimed (Shveka 2012; Culbertson 2011; Kleber 2018). Much less attention has been paid to other much more widespread forms of involuntary labor which range from semi-dependent statuses, labor tax obligations ("corvée"), to debt slavery (Kleber 2018; Silverman 2015).

A major focus of debate has been practices of exchange (“markets” and “trade”). These have provided the grist of debates over Polanyi’s categories and between the general camps of classical economists and Marxists. There is no doubt that commod (p. 329) ities were exchanged, sometimes in kind and sometimes in specie. The significance is nonetheless unclear, as there are multiple types of exchange and of markets (e.g., Swedberg 2005; Graeber 2011). Scholars such as Jursa (2010) and Pirngruber (2017) forcefully argue for market economies in first-millennium Babylonia; often for Yehud and Samerina, exchange is discussed in terms of (long-distance) luxury trade and “monetization” (Altmann 2016, 1, 60, 301); “monetization” has dominated scholarship more than is warranted, since coinage was little used in the Levant until the late Persian empire at the earliest, and even then there is no reason to assume it automatically changed economic practices. In fact, coinage is often confused with money, but these are not the same thing (Altmann 2016, 13; Hübner 2014; Graeber 2011, 46–62).

“Cultural” practices are not always considered within economic analyses, but since they require time, effort, and resources, they fall within the framework considered here. Particularly relevant for this essay are “religious” practices such as tithing, sacrifice, and prophecy and the practices of literacy/scribalism (and their requisite training). Tithing and sacrifice were essential for the functioning of the temple cult. Insofar as they were compelled one might consider them a form of taxation; insofar as they were voluntary one might still consider them a form of informal taxation (Boer 2015; Olken and Singhal 2011; Malett 2016). They also fall within Wolf’s peasant “ceremonial fund” (Wolf 1966, 4–10).

Prophecy is one form of divination, which was widely practiced across the ANE by both rich and poor (e.g., Nissinen 2003, 1). Prophecy is much cheaper than extispicy, and the Hebrew Bible’s favoring of prophecy over other forms of divination might be a matter of making a virtue of economic necessity. The ways in which prophets were funded, however, are poorly documented. Amos famously claims not to be a prophet (Amos 7:14), and Nehemiah claimed his enemies hired prophets against him (Neh 6:12–14). Texts such as Joel are often discussed as examples of prophets employed within the temple (“cultic prophets”). The phenomenon likely included both professional, paid prophets and more “lay” prophets.[19]

Our understanding of education in the southern Levant suffers from a notorious lack of documentation, though the vast majority of learning was most probably in the household and/or conducted as apprenticeships. Only a handful of persons would have learned advanced literacy, due both to its cost in unproductive man-hours and limited social need. No doubt there were skilled oral performers, whose work is largely lost to the historical record.[20]

Lastly, one can mention feasting. In the ancient Levantine context, this includes traditions such as the *marzeaḥ* (Dvorjetski 2016), the new moon (McAleese 2011), and Passover (Bergant 1994). It also includes elite distinction displays, such as posited for Ramat Raḥel (Fulton et al. 2015; Langgut et al. 2013). Feasting has multiple ramifications, including

the (re)distribution of food, the reinforcement of social hierarchies and ties, and the transmission of social memory (Hayden and Villeneuve 2011; MacDonald 2008; Yee 2017).

(p. 330) Reconstructing the Socioeconomic Worlds of the Minor Prophets

Attention now turns to examples in the Minor Prophets where such economic considerations prove significant.

Amos 4 and Wealthy Women

The passage with which the essay began is helpfully analyzed using the information raised earlier. First, the reference to the Bashan (roughly the modern Golan Heights) highlights the values of subsistence and husbandry; the region appears in the Hebrew Bible as having fecund pastureland and strong cattle (Deut 32:14; Ps 22:12; Ezek 39:18; Mic 7:14). Cattle were used primarily as labor for agriculture but also were a small source of subsistence (with sheep and goats) for pastoralists (Boer 2015, 60–64). Second, the passage raises the question of gendered economics. Although normally understood as a critique of elite women,[21] van Wieringen argues the passage instead feminizes elite men (2018, 404). Amos does not use the word "fat," though interpreters suggest this connotation. Contrary to the modern West, a majority of cultures have valued "plumpness" in women (Ember et al. 2005, 258), a value often thought to be related to a threat of starvation. Ember et al. have argued that the value correlates instead with "male protest": the male valuation of larger women typically appears in cultures in which men are supposed to be "aggressive, strong, and sexually potent" but are not *necessarily* socially dominant (Ember et al. 2005, 264–265). Irwin has argued this passage is not critiquing women's size or wealth but their subversion of the (gender) social hierarchy and hence the social "safety net" of the patriarchal household (Irwin 2012, 241–246).

These studies raise a third issue: did (elite) women's economic roles actually conform to male assumptions, or were females active economic agents—perhaps vintners, to take the passage literally? Women were indeed involved in the household production of wine (e.g., Ebeling 2010, 64–67), and there is little evidence for an elite culture of idleness in the Southern Levant (Houston 2008, 30; Adams 2014, 184, 187). In any case, the meaning of the critique depends on the understanding of the economic actions of the agents involved, the social structure, and the relevant valuation of that structure; the syntactical meaning itself is not determinative.[22]

Joel and Economies of "Religion"

The book of Joel is dominated by agricultural images: as realities, metaphors, and signs of YHWH's (dis)pleasure. The book has garnered much commentary for its elaborate depiction of a locust plague, symptomatic of the precarities of subsistence agriculture. (p. 331)

The specific economic details in the book are largely unsurprising, yet they reveal some aspects of how that economy was understood by the authors.

There are two aspects to this emic understanding: economics as being directly indicative of divine (dis)pleasure and the dialectic interrelation of the economy with the cult. For the former, the second chapter uses the "day of YHWH" to describe the plague and its ramifications as divine action. Agricultural plenty is also seen as the result of favor. For the latter, after the description of the locust plague the text immediately moves to the resulting lack of grain and wine *offerings* (1:9) before the effects on the farmers themselves (1:11); the first result of divine forgiveness is again renewed offerings (2:14). Both of these aspects find parallels in the Mesopotamian tradition, particularly in the city laments, and a specific link between locusts and cultic inadequacy also finds an intriguing parallel (Hurowitz 1993). The use of both of these genres as apotropaic liturgies is suggestive for Joel; perhaps liturgy counts as an economic practice from this perspective, even though Barton (2001, 21) emphasizes the difference between using a liturgical form and actually being a liturgy. In reading Joel it is misleading to view ANE temples as *merely* mechanisms for expropriating surplus (Jursa 2010, 54–55). In this emic view temples are the reason and cause for such surplus. One could understand these offerings as examples of Wolf's "ceremonial fund" (Wolf 1966, 4–10), though others might counter that this is merely an example of successful elite obfuscation of taxes in the guise of religion (Boer 2015, 152).

Joel 3 [Heb. 4] complains about a different sort of economic activity: the (Mediterranean) slave trade.[23] Its critique is largely cultic: it is an affront to YHWH and his cult, since it is YHWH's silver and gold the traders steal. The pericope merely gives stereotypical reasons for the sale of children (lasciviousness), and it is difficult to draw more specific conclusions (such as a link to debt slavery). That the critique is not against slavery per se can be seen in the promised inversion in which the Tyrians and Sidonians will themselves be sold into slavery (for the aromatics trade; 3:8 [Heb. 4:8]). These economic systems may provide some measure of dating for this pericope—slavery only became a major part of the Greek economy in the classical era, and Artaxerxes III destroyed Sidon in 343 BCE and Alexander destroyed Tyre in 332 BCE.[24]

Haggai and Prosperity

Haggai offers a perspective similar to Joel, tying economic success to the cult. Haggai speaks of infertility, drought, blight, mildew, and hail (1:9–11; 2:16–19). Rather than lament a lack of offerings, the prophet rebukes a lack of temple rebuilding. The presence of a functioning temple cult is explicitly tied to income—both gold and silver (2:7–9), though the mechanism is vague.

Haggai 1:4 speaks of the people living in "paneled houses," which may imply imported wood (cedar?) paneling. This modicum of wealth[25] contrasts with the text's depiction of poor environmental conditions, raising the possibility that the oracle addressed a class (including the governor and the high priest) better off than others. Verse 6's wage-earn-

ing (p. 332) and verse 14's mention of all the people challenge such an interpretation, however, and rather seem to envision a reasonably comfortable community recently afflicted by a series of natural misfortunes. The people as a whole apparently have the means by which to rebuild the temple even if not with monarchic extravagance.

It would be dangerous to infer from Haggai's critique that the average farmer had little interest in the cult. There may have been competing contemporary altars and/or temples of which records have not survived. Moreover, the rhetoric of the text admits that timing, rather than poverty, was the people's justification for not rebuilding.

Micah and Avaricious Leaders

Among its critiques, Micah explicitly condemns the ruling classes for "selling" their services (3:9–12); "bribe," "price," and "silver" appear in parallel as illicit recompenses for legal decisions, priestly teachings, and oracles, respectively. Does this statement imply that leaders ought to perform all these activities gratis, that they charged too much for their services, or (as the word "bribe" implies) that the product was tailored inappropriately to the audience ("telling them what they want to hear," cf. 3:5)? Does this imply such individuals were "independently wealthy," not fully employed in these roles, and/or receive their living from an institution (whether palace or temple)? As ANE judges tended to be institutional officials, elders, or priests, and priests received shares from temple sacrifices, the interpretation that such rulings should be without charge is attractive.[26]

One could describe this expectation of gratis rulings in a number of different ways. If the focus of the critique is the treatment of the poor by the more wealthy, the role of giving rulings would be understood as social role obligation (noblesse oblige), patronal duties, charity, and/or part of the institutions of palace and temple. If the focus instead is the differential treatment of people, then the critique would be more of patronage systems than economic ones. Ben Zvi understands the text as claiming that YHWH has replaced all three roles for Yehud (Ben Zvi 2000, 84–85), while O'Brien sees a general critique of Persian-period leaders (O'Brien 2015, 32). Neither interpretation indicates how the author or readers of the text thought religious production should be financed.

Zechariah and "Market Economy"

Zechariah 11 contains an obscure passage in which (following the LXX), a first-person narrator shepherds the "merchants of the flock" during a period of neglectful, warring shepherds. After asking for his wages from the merchants, the narrator receives "thirty silvers" (MT; shekels?) which he casts into the temple treasury (vv. 12–13).

A shekel of silver in (Persian) Yehud was approximately 10.99 g,[27] making the total weight roughly 329.7 g. At 2019 silver prices, the equivalent would only be US $168.15. Thirty shekels of silver is the price for a slave listed in Exod 21, so many interpret this as a (p. 333) paltry sum. On the other hand, the contemporaneous "minimum wage" for labor in Babylonia was 24 shekels per year (Jursa 2015, 360–362),[28] making 30 shekels slightly more than a basic yearly wage in Babylonia—a fairly large amount of silver (and slaves

were not inexpensive). The text is not clear for what period this wage is intended. If for a year, it is a respectable unskilled wage; if for one month (v. 8), it is a very high one. In either case, v. 13 implies YHWH finds it offensively low.

The text is unclear who the narrator and the recipient of the wages are but raises the perennial question of whether there were "labor markets" in the ANE. It is clear that in the first millennium BCE there was a general shortage in the labor force and that one could hire oneself voluntarily (see especially Stolper 2003; Jursa 2010, 2015; Guillaume 2012); why the wages in this passage are paid by merchants is unclear. This passage also provides an interesting contrast to the one in Micah discussed earlier, where there appeared to be a critique of markets for religious personnel (assuming the narrator of Zech 11 is meant to be a "prophet"). The problem for this author appears to be the "low" wage rather than wages per se.

In its ideal vision of temple and pilgrimage, the book of Zechariah closes with the claim that the temple will no longer house "Canaanites" (14:21). These Canaanites are plausibly Tyrian or Sidonian traders (as assumed earlier for chapter 11), since there is ample evidence of Mediterranean fish remains in the Jerusalem environs and for Phoenician activity all along the Levantine coast.[29] Canaanites also provided the famous purple dye needed for certain cultic fabrics.[30] Is this a critique of specific temple practices of merchants in the author's time (cf. Neh 3:31), a complaint about foreigners in the temple, a critique of trade per se, a critique of the slave trade (Ristau 2016, 183), or merely a utopian vision of a future with such abundance that traders were unnecessary? A better understanding of (long-distance) trade in Yehud might clarify some of these issues. Edelman has suggested that Jerusalem might have housed a Tyrian trading colony (2006), but it is hard to gauge whether the actions of Nehemiah (on which she bases her arguments) or the rhetoric of this verse relates to trade or "markets" per se.

The Minor Prophets and Economic Justice

The (Minor) Prophets receive much attention for their calls for economic justice. They critique oppression of the needy (Amos 2:6–8), the seizing of fields and houses (Mic 2:2), eviction (Mic 2:9), and dishonest scales (Mic 6:11). Their vision of proper treatment of the poor is echoed in royal and proverbial texts across the ANE (Altmann 2016, 33–47; Foster 2018, 870–874).

As Houston has pointed out, the prophets address justice on a moral basis rather than on the level of economic structures. Indeed, he sees an inherent contradiction in the authors —whom he sees as urban upper class—depending on the system they condemn (p. 334) (Houston 2008, 72–73, 96),[31] and the punishment issued by YHWH affects the poor and the rich equally (Houston 2008, 94–95; also O'Brien 2015, lv). In a similar vein Bird has argued that the concern for the poor in prophetic texts is exclusively for propertied males, not the poorest nor women and children (1997, 67–78). While critical theorists emphasize the self-interested nature of elite justifications of economic systems, structures that seem regressive to modern eyes can be favorably viewed by the poor involved.[32]

Since prophetic texts are inherently about values, they resonate with the values of the scholars who study them, touching on the conflicts not only between stereotypical camps such as Marxist/capitalist, religious/secular, or fundamentalist/liberal—but also the basic divide between those who see all structure as inherently bad and those who see order as inherently good.[33] The importance of these texts for living communities and the continuing relevance of struggles for a just society mean such conflations are unavoidable.

Future Prospects

A number of detailed, rich studies of the ANE economy have appeared recently (though few specifically on the Minor Prophets), yet there remains ample work to be done and new avenues to be explored.[34] As argued earlier, fundamental concepts require scrutiny (such as “work,” “efficiency,” “growth”). More cooperation between historians and scientists could help fill in gaps in the historical data—not only fields such as paleoclimatology and paleobotany but also experimental archaeology.[35] Experiments in reconstructing man-hour costs, food storage technologies, and transportation needs, for example, could provide finer grained data for understanding the functioning of the ancient economy.[36] Further, greater engagement with the “Human Relations Area Files” could help improve socioeconomic modeling for the southern Levant in general and for the phenomena of religious intermediation (divination and literary) more specifically. Closer attention to the interrelations between assumptions concerning social structure, economic functioning, and values will produce more clarity concerning both the worlds of the Minor Prophets and their messages.

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Notes:

([1.]) This essay sidesteps the issues of dating and redaction, discussing the economics of the southern Levant from the Iron Age to the Ptolemaic period as the frame in which these books were likely created, collated, and redacted. All stages naturally had economic contexts.

([2.]) Altmann (2016, 5) saw four schools of economic thought, though both “substantivist” and “institutional” schools are part of classical economic tradition. On p. 21, he saw three.

([3.]) For example, Scheidel, Morris, and Saller (2007), Jursa (2010), Manning (2015), and Pirgruber (2017). Jursa also appeals to economic anthropology (Jursa 2002, 203).

([4.]) Including “intangible” production (Moulton 2004; Warsh 2007) and increased awareness of well-being (Andrén et al. 2019).

([5.]) The most notorious case is Morris Silver’s focus on classical economics; Boer (2015) admits his own neo-Marxist interests.

([6.]) See Altmann (2016, 16–19) on the hidden value judgements in economic analyses. Marxist critical theorists tend to be more attuned to the ideological nature of the categories of analysis, while still assuming their own sets of value judgments.

([7.]) Weber (2013, 65–67) raised the issue of profit-making being only one potential goal of economic action.

([8.]) Weber (2013, 64) insisted there was no understanding of economic action without understanding the actors' meaning of those actions. He also insisted that "wealth" was more than material goods (89).

([9.]) For a bleak argument in how constraints could in fact be politically manipulated, see Richardson (2016).

([10.]) Presenting our own value judgments of the material is necessary for discussions of their relevance for today, but honesty about the line between valuation and description is important. Compare the impact of classical economic studies emphasizing "efficiency" (code for producing the most surplus capital) with Marxist studies emphasizing "expropriation" (lingo for any sort of asymmetric power dynamic). Both are using valued categories as descriptive analyses.

([11.]) MacDonald (2008, 57–68; 77–79). Richardson (2016) argues that this benefited only institutional dependents.

([12.]) Systems such as kinship households and informal taxation could be considered as social means to negotiate these. In certain cases, temples offered interest-free grain loans as well (see Jursa 2002, 208–210).

([13.]) Ebeling (2010) includes discussions of education, agriculture, pottery, weaving, winemaking, perfume, religion, jewelry, and rituals.

([14.]) For an overview of Achaemenid taxation, see Kleber (2015). In Yehud, taxation is often considered primarily in terms of the effects of silver (Edelman 2015, 189).

([15.]) Weber's work contains much more useful material than he himself applied to the ancient Levant. Schloen (2001) explicitly developed this model for the Levant (but only for before the seventh century BCE).

([16.]) For history of the argument in the ANE, see Morris and Manning (2005b, 10–25); Morris and Manning (2005a); and Jursa (2010, 20–21).

([17.]) Strictly speaking, this term is not used in Lenski (1966), though is often cited as such. There he discusses "advanced horticultural societies" (142–188) and "agrarian societies" (189–196); for a schematic graphic, see 284. "Advanced agrarian" comes from his later textbook (Lenski et al. 1991, 170–201, esp. Figure 7.17; 189–130 in the 1978 version); Houston (2008) called this the "tributary state model"; also Adams (2014, 83).

([18.]) See, for example, Jursa (2002). Compare this to modern compounding debt, where the supposedly low interest rates given to students or third-world countries in reality often requires them to pay back more than double what they borrowed—essentially over 100 percent interest in noncompounding terms—even without defaulting.

([19.]) Nissinen (2003, 98–99) discusses (Assyrian) prophets as being from a separate class of diviners, but this relates more to the required education rather than potential renumeration.

([20.]) The classic study is Niditch (1996); on Persian-era educational contexts, see Silverman (forthcoming).

([21.]) Houston (2008, 58–73). The image of the “cows of the Bashan” is typically understood to denote their luxurious lifestyle (e.g., Wacker 1998, 322–323), but the passage permits a wider range of readings. One could possibly even read this in line with a wider folkloric tradition linking women, violence, and wine (cf. Weststeijn 2016).

([22.]) The MT, Targums, and LXX have “their” (masc. plural). “Their lords” is in the context unclear. Taken as it stands, “their” could refer to the lords of the oppressed needy, and thus either the king, the elites, and/or patriarchal household heads. If emended to feminine plural, it could refer to the women’s own husbands. Van Wieringen (2018, 405) follows instead the Latin “your” (See Wolff 1977, 203 n. b).

([23.]) Slaves were a much more significant part of the Athenian economy than the ANE economy. Estimates of the percentage of the population that were slaves in Athens have been as high as 40 percent (Manning 2018, 132).

([24.]) For slavery in Greece, see Manning (2018, 127–134); for Tyre offering a *terminus ante quem*, Wolff (1977, 4). Barton (2001, 16) mistakenly cites this as Artaxerxes IV destroying Tyre.

([25.]) Cf. 1 Kgs 7:7; see Petersen (1984, 48; 50). This would contradict the common understanding of the text reflecting an economically impoverished Yehud; for example, O’Brien (2015, lii). Kessler (2002, 128) argues it refers to roofs rather than panels and thus an impoverished situation, but a critique of people roofing their homes would be odd.

([26.]) Evidence for judges from Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt all show various officials and priests presiding as judges as one part of their official duties, and in certain cases local prominent citizens did as well. So far I have been unable to find any direct evidence for judicial remuneration.

([27.]) Tal (2007, 25); average silver weight (coins themselves 11.33 g). The weight in Babylonia was 8.33 g.

([28.]) By minimum is meant the lowest basic rate of two shekels a month. Jursa notes that it increases during the course of the Persian period. For rough comparison, the minimum

wage in the United States in 2018 was roughly $15,080 a year, so the equivalent 1.25 times the minimum wage would be $18,850.

([29.]) See Edelman (2006); Noonan (2011). Other texts where “Canaanites” (either in the MT or LXX) have often been understood to be “merchants” include Zech 11:7, 11; Isa 23:8 (explicitly from Tyre); Prov 31:24 (in an economic context); Job 40:30.

([30.]) Stevens (2006, 120) claims this is the referent of this verse. For cultic fabrics, see descriptions of the tabernacle and priestly vestments in Exodus and temple building in 2 Chr 2. On the dye, see the analysis of an uprovenanced Persian alabaster jar that may have passed through Palestine from Egypt (currently in Jerusalem) by Koren (2008) and Westenholz and Stolper (2002).

([31.]) O’Brien (2015, liii) sees a different class, and Adams (2017) denies the existence of a unified class.

([32.]) Barkan and Holmqvist (1986, 27), discussing “informal taxation,” report that the poorest perceive themselves to benefit the most from the system.

([33.]) Well-noted by Lenski (1966, 22–23), where he calls these “conservatives” and “radicals”; Altmann (2016, 26).

([34.]) Indeed, Manning and Morris’s six suggestions for more advanced historical economic research are still relevant a decade and a half later (Manning and Morris 2005b, 3–5).

([35.]) The first two issues are raised in the very different studies of Boer (2015) and Manning (2018).

([36.]) For example a forthcoming study by Agut-Labordère et al. that shows the practical effects in a switch from emmer to durum wheat in terms of processing, transport, and storage.

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Postcolonial Approaches to the Minor Prophets

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay explores the state of postcolonial analysis in studies of the Minor Prophets. In understanding what postcolonialism is, what it is becoming, and how it has faltered in studies of the Minor Prophets, scholars may be better able to find ways of incorporating its insights into their own work while preserving its critique of inequalities inherent within the institutions that continue to support the scholars themselves. Those insights must begin with an acceptance of postcolonialism as inherently a challenge to the world that the Minor Prophets perceived and to trends in biblical interpretation. In its exploration of postcolonial analyses, this essay explains the general contours of postcolonialism, identifies elements of its shift into areas of ideological colonialism not confined to historical consciousness, and draws out points of tension between postcolonial inquiry and the Minor Prophets.

Keywords: postcolonialism, Minor Prophets, Judah, Israel, Bible, Yehud, Persian period

> [P]ostcolonial criticism bears witness not only to contemporary inequalities, but also to their historical conditions.
>
> —Bhambra (2007, 16)

Postcolonial analysis of the Minor Prophets has yet to be adequately done, and the way forward is not entirely clear. Part of the problem is postcolonialism's marginalization in the cornucopia of academic methods. Where it is attempted, it is frequently forced into the vocabulary of an already valued, dominant tradition (Dube and Wafula 2017). Another part is that the intended audience(s) of the Minor Prophets was not a *colonized* subject but a community subordinate to imperial rule—a distinction for which George Steinmetz's work will be helpful in the following discussion (Steinmetz 2014). My goal here will be to explain postcolonialism, to identify elements of its shift into areas of ideological colonialism not confined to historical consciousness, and to draw out points of tension between postcolonial inquiry and the Minor Prophets. Doing that entails discussions of postcolonial criticism, studies of the Minor Prophets, and bringing the two together. By explaining

what postcolonialism is, what it is becoming, and how it has faltered in biblical studies, it is my hope that scholars will find better ways of incorporating its insights into their own works in ways that challenge inequalities inherent within the institutions that continue to support them. After all, if we think of postcolonial criticism as directed only at the past (and not at present institutions that preserve its legacy), it will never fulfill its charge, as Gurminder (p. 342) Bhambra states it, of "opening out and questioning the implied assumptions of the dominant discourses" (Bhambra 2007, 144).

The Contours of a (General) Problem

Postcolonialism's marginalization in biblical studies has restricted its influence to fringe interpretations and communities, a point that R. Sugirtharajah has observed over the course of almost two decades (2001, 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2012). Where mainstream studies have adopted it, it has typically been reappropriated, in which its more challenging and subversive elements, especially to the dominant scholarly discourse and its culture, are neutralized in favor of an already presupposed pursuit of "truth," the definition of which has already been legitimated by an academic discipline. And in that, it has lost much of the essence of what it is and *should* be.

Sugirtharajah reminds us that as a method *and* a practice, postcolonialism does not—*should not*—simply describe the situation of *any* community under an imperial or colonial power (2001, 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2012). Postcolonialism is not passive. It is frustrated, if not irate. It demands justice, which it sees in the destruction of responsible oppressive institutional systems and powers. It challenges the assumed power that a colonizer takes for itself. It demands accountability by the colonizer for the colonized, who attempts, culturally and politically, to transform a colonized people, like an *imago Dei* of sociopolitical power, into an image of itself.[1]

To accomplish those things, postcolonialism aggressively pursues the "space after" colonialism rather than trying to roll back its effects. For it is in that space, where the dust and debris have settled after colonization, that the colonized subject comes face to face with a new oppressive reality. In that reality, the subject must challenge the domination of colonial power and its political organization while accepting the hard truth that the effects of colonization cannot be retracted; they must instead be resisted because colonization will always be a genetic part of subaltern identity. In biblical studies, postcolonialism aggressively and subversively interrogates the dominant trend in speaking about the biblical text as a completed artifact, instead interpreting it to expose the "link between power and knowledge" that Western (colonial) academic discourse preserves (Bignall 2010, 64). It does so, according to Sugirtharajah, "by treat[ing] texts no longer as moral or spiritual reservoirs, but as a system of codes which interpreters must disentangle to reveal the hidden power relations and ideologies lurking in supposedly innocent narratives" (2012, 185). To be effective, postcolonial criticism *must challenge the presuppositions of the discipline itself*, as well as its tendency to omit confession to the colonialism,

racism, and ideologies of oppression that have woven themselves throughout the discipline's institutional fabric.

(p. 343) Theoretical Problems and Definitions Relevant to Postcolonialism and the Minor Prophets

According to the biblical texts, Judeans during the sixth–fourth century BCE clung to the possibility that the kingdom of Judah would be restored (cf. Ezra 9:1, 4, 15; Neh 9:1; 11:20; 13:26; Jer 29:4). During that time, the Persian imperial government had decreed that displaced peoples could return to their homelands, which fueled those hopes. Though the imperial government was still the central power, regional territories were permitted substantial freedoms as how best to fulfill imperial political and economic mandates (Cataldo 2009). Some of the biblical authors and prophets saw that as a prelude to independence and restoration. Nahum, for example, claimed that "Yahweh will restore the majesty of Jacob and Israel" 2:2 [Heb. 23]; author's translation). In that verse, the Hebrew for "majesty" is *geon*, which refers to the wealth, power, and magnificence of a kingdom—those things that would be expected in a restored kingdom.

This issue of restoration, however, has become a stumbling block for postcolonial analysis. The dominant tradition(s) of biblical interpretation has tended to read "restoration" in the Minor Prophets and elsewhere in theological terms consistent with the prevailing normatives of either Judaism or Christianity. Sugirtharajah argues that such tendencies conflate the community or individual with her sociopolitical context in their emphases upon the historical centrality of a theologically defined community, an idea that is more a product of modern academic scholarship than it is clearly testified to in the Bible (2001, 175). The inherent risk—and common tendency—is that modern theological interpretations of the communities represented by the Minor Prophets tend to transform those communities into reflections of an idealized community consistent with theological interpretations of a restored "Body of Christ" or "Israel." Put differently, we tend to read in the "community" of Israel the theological ancestor of our own theologically defined communities.

That tendency runs counter to what Kinyua argues is a mandate for postcolonialism, that the particularities of culture, language, concepts of individual and community within historically contingent political and economic realities—largely, historical consciousness—must remain at the forefront and be unrestrained by (foreign) colonial frameworks (2013, 59). Yet that has largely been unaccomplished. Scholarly focus, for example, on "messages of hope" in the Minor Prophets emphasizes a positivistic purpose that fits within modern expectations for the Bible while circumventing the postcolonial call for subversive discourse (contra Boda 2007; Petterson 2010). Such foci are part of a larger institutional problem. Sugirtharajah (2001) reminds us, as does Bhambra, that our prevailing academic discourses are products of historical colonialism, as well as current colonial tendencies preserved in the legacies of colonial powers. Our task must be to challenge

conventional bodies and institutions of knowledge where they are (p. 344) artifacts of colonial modes of rationalism and legitimation (2012, 181–184). Bhambra argues further that postcolonial approaches challenge dominant narratives—of history and of identity—to provide more adequate categories of analysis, shaped by comprehensive understanding of inclusivity and exclusivity (2007, 15–17). Yet within biblical studies practitioners frequently preserve the very institutionalized legacies of the discipline that postcolonialism demands be subverted.

Evolving Toward Salvation: Where Postcolonialism Must Go in the Book of the Twelve

As Steinmetz described generally, there is a difference between imperialism and colonialism: both categories that have been hastily placed underneath the concept of "empire" (Steinmetz 2014, 78–79). Imperialism, in contrast to colonialism, does not necessarily involve conquest and occupation in the wholescale way that colonialism expects (Steinmetz 2014, 78–79). It is possible, then, that communities, while complaining about the demands of imperial politics and economics, could also retain all or many of the cultural practices and values that define them. The distinction is important because it elucidates some of the difficulty in applying postcolonial analysis to the Minor Prophets. The historical context of the Minor Prophets was marked by imperialism, *not* colonialism.

If one accepts a sixth–fourth century BCE date for the redacted compilation of the Minor Prophets, then the historical context was characterized by a relatively permissive Persian empire.[2] The administrative hierarchy under the Persian imperial authorities made room for relative autonomy as long as regional territories remained obedient.[3] According to Steinmetz's definition—this main point should be restated—while Yehud was an imperial province it was not a colonized territory; its upper class (or literati, in particular) retained much of its shared culture, cultural memories, traditions, and sense of identity (Steinmetz 2014, 78–81). All of those things were channeled into texts, some of which comprise what we now refer to as "the Bible."

As an example, the tone of Malachi and its emphasis upon priests and the covenant, as well as the coming messenger who "prepares the way," implies a context in which there was a reason for hope in a return to an idealized past (restoration). That hope is expressed not toward the immediate liberation of a people under the weight of colonization but toward the reestablishment of sociopolitical institutions within the community. It was hope in a renewed, or restored, independent kingdom of Israel/Judah.

Malachi's message focuses on ways in which to stabilize the cultural world to make the community ready for restoration, while also preventing another occurrence of "divine judgement." It highlights points of disruption, as David Petersen notes, through the use of diatribes that shape the prevailing discourse (Petersen 1995, 29–35). That strategy heightens the intensity in the text by recognizing the need for a restored relationship (p. 345) between the people and the priests, which served as the model for the relation-

ship between Yahweh and the nation. Once restored, Yahweh would act on behalf of those who revered him (cf. 4:2 [Heb.3:20]). It would be a day, according to Malachi, that would burn like an oven; all the arrogant and evildoers would be stubble (see 4:1 [Heb. 3:19]). Of them, neither root nor branch, metaphors for family lines and cultural grounding, would be left. On that day, those who revered Yahweh would be preserved and restored. They would "go out like calves from the stall" and would tread down the wicked, who would be the ashes under the soles of their feet. And all of that would happen, according to Malachi, if the audience remembered the teachings of Moses (4:4 [Heb. 3:22]), a figure that symbolized the conquest of land and the Israelite/Judean nation/kingdom—imagery that would have been appealing to a community in diaspora.

But where they might at first blush seem amenable to postcolonial criticism, texts such as Malachi bear nagging difficulties. The specificity of audience doesn't lend itself easily to the more universal definition of "righteous" community that biblical interpreters have traditionally sought.[4] What postcolonial criticism calls for, again, are subversive strategies of interpretation that dismantle conventional interpretive models in order to give life to the identity and experience of the minority from *her* perspective. The Minor Prophets, if they can be used successfully within postcolonial analysis, must be tested for strategies that challenge the very traditions that have elevated them as texts that speak with (universal) authority.[5]

Doing that means that postcolonialism must be capable of transitioning from a focus on political colonization, working around the imperialism-colonialism divide, to ideological colonization—something that I believe it is equipped to do, and Musa Dube (2000), James Cone (1970, 1974, 2011), Bhambra, Pui-Lan (2009), Sugirtharajah, and others have already taken steps toward that end. But academics must, as Sugirtharajah argues, when it comes to seeing and talking about colonialism in biblical and other academic studies, resist the present, willful amnesia and moral blindness that prevail in academic discourse (Sugirtharajah 2012, 8). One must come to appreciate that "[t]he truth about postcolonialism is that it is not really a theory but a way of looking at the production of knowledge of both *the past and the present*. It enables one to look at the data using certain techniques and practical awareness gained from colonial experience. Theories do not have a fixed status. They are susceptible to changes caused by new questions and internal debates generated among the practitioners" (2012, 177, emphasis mine).

Postcolonial approaches to the Minor Prophets must challenge the dominant interpretive tradition(s), like that represented by Marvin Sweeney, who argues that divine purpose was the central factor behind the writing and redacting of the Minor Prophets (2003, 343). His argument presupposes a theological unity on the level of God as an active agent capable of restoring the people. In other words, he argues that what unifies the Book of the Twelve is a common belief in God that superseded historical and cultural differences. Presupposing any ideological influence of monotheism in Israel and Judah, however, is an interpretive move guilty of Western colonial expectations. *That* is one of the dangers that Sugirtharajah and others caution against. Presupposing modern (p. 346) monotheistic concepts of belief in God, *as distinctly religious ideas*, problematically elevates a dominant in-

terpretive tradition, with ties to colonial history, as the meaningful basis for a "clean" history.[6] Instead, belief in Yahweh should be interpreted on a historically contingent, *political* level (Cataldo 2017). In The Twelve, Yahweh represents not only judgment but the hope in a restored kingdom. Not surprisingly, scholarly analyses of the Minor Prophets have tended to presuppose the central importance of Jerusalem as a holy center, as though a theocracy were the sociopolitical institution of power and authority in Yehud (cf. Sweeney 2003, 343) as part of a pivot toward universalizing the "community of God." But enough work has been done to show that a theocracy did not exist in Yehud, nor was it even feasible (see Cataldo 2009 and Fried 2004). In addition, Wöhrle's argument that the Book of the Four (Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah) details a history of "certain historical points and God's perspective on those historical points" depends upon the idea of a universal God that directs and reflects upon history, an idea that does not threaten the colonial theological framework (Wöhrle 2008, 612). Moreover, the notion that religion was an institution that drove sociopolitical change reflects a more modern sense of it. In the ancient world, "religion" was not something that was distinct from that which was cultural or political.

Condemnation as a Dialogic Challenge

Leo Perdue writes of Hosea: "[t]he prophet condemns the nation for mixing with the peoples who devoured strength (7:7–8). In Israel hybridity, including the integration of Canaanite fertility cults into Yahwistic religion or the abandonment of the latter and its replacement with other cults, was well-represented in the state and private/family religions in Israel. This religious hybridity was also accompanied by a transition in culture" (Perdue 2013, 183). The prophet emphasized exclusion of the community along with rejection of foreign nations. The purity of the community and its relationship to Yahweh was fundamental to the preservation of its sociopolitical stability, which was reinforced through its connection to the Exodus tradition (see also Ackroyd 1963, 246–247). Such an understanding is consistent with Mark Leuchter's proposal that Hosea, as part of the Book of the Twelve, together with Malachi presented a model for teaching "diverse textual corpora in the context of a single, dominant temple framework" (Leuchter 2014, 249). Leuchter's proposal is mildly compelling as a purpose that motivated compilation. Intentional compilation of diverse materials to narrate the story of a shared identity is a known sociological phenomenon; that strategy in the biblical texts fits the context of a community seeking to reestablish itself, whether as a community or, more strategically, as a community in authority. The symbol of that emphasis (the temple in Hosea) speaks to the circumstances that surrounded the author and his community (Ackroyd 1963, 247–248).

Perdue argues that Hosea, in its response to the demands of group cohesion, symbolizes the subaltern defending those who are victims of oppressive political systems, (p. 347) including both those who are royalists in Israel and the Assyrian conquerors. For him, Hosea's goal was to resist and subvert imperial systems of oppression (1963, 174). Sweeney argues that despite Hosea's emphasis on the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Is-

rael, its frequent references to Judah (Hos 1:7; 5:5, 10, 14; 8:14; 10:11; and 12:3) and the reunification of Israel and Judah under a Davidic monarch (3:5) encourages a reading of the book that focuses on the larger question of Jerusalem. He also sees the placement of Joel before Hosea as ensuring that questions of Jerusalem are set as the agenda for the remaining sequence (Sweeney 2012, 343). Perdue finds suspect such an ease with which Hosea can be adapted from one context to another (Perdue 2013, 174). He argues that Hosea sought to negate the reality of imperial culture, its view of religion, and its interpretation of history under the leadership of the deity Ashur. In the place of those ideas, which constituted the imperial metanarrative, Hosea emphasized the reformation of the (religious) community of Yahweh (Perdue 2013, 174).

Despite its appeal, there are problematic presuppositions in Perdue's argument. He presupposes that the entire context of Israel would have been familiar from the Torah and its commandments, as well as the so-called sacred history of Yahweh. Yet while Yahweh served as the national god at various historical points, and we can assume that the ruling authorities were familiar with Yahweh, Perdue's argument that the whole of Israel/Judah knew about Yahweh and his concomitant cult likely defined by the aristocracy is presumptuous. In addition, he seems to presuppose a quasi-Marxist expectation of the landed poor seeking imperial authority (Perdue 2013, 186). His rather homogenizing claim duplicates what scholars have done with the "poor in the land," Ezra-Nehemiah's *am ha'arets*, who were not deported to Babylonia: in academic hands, they become a simplified category that supports reconstruction of the historical context. Yet that biblical category can only be defined through the perspective of the (scribal) aristocracy, *not* that of a subaltern. Perdue links imperial rule to the oppressive "other" while interpreting the prophet as a representative of the subaltern (Perdue 2013, 186). It seems to be a common strategy within scholarship, which wants to find in Israel itself the oppressed "other." That the prophet calls his audience to return to Israelite/Judean traditions centered on Yahweh (to such an extent that Ackroyd interprets Hosea as focused foremost on worship, with economic disaster as a symptom of religious infidelity), however, reflects a conservative call to renewal (1963, 257).

Biblical scholars must also begin to more fully acknowledge the historical and cultural reductivism and prejudices within the biblical texts. Note, for example, Hos 12:7 [Heb. 2:8] "In the merchant's hands are scales of deceit. He loves to oppress" (author's translation). While some scholars have interpreted the passage to be a concern for the poor, it bears a more political weight. The term for "merchant," *cena'an*, is related to the term for "Canaan(ite)," suggesting that the Canaanite is one who loves to deal treacherously, or be deceitful, when it comes to scales. The outsider, the Canaanite, is an inferior being whose intent is not directed toward preserving the cohesion and stability of the community. The larger context of Hos 12:2–14 [Heb. 12:3–15] suggests that use of the term "Canaanite," or trader, is meant as a condemnation of the community. The community and its history of rebellion has become like the Canaanite, or like the merchant who has pursued goals and (p. 348) products that are contrary to the defining ideology of the community. The "Canaanite," the "other," must be kept outside the community's walls.

Returning to a previous point, Perdue maintains that a postcolonial reading of Hosea can focus on the prophet's imagined contest between deities. He interprets Hosea as attempting to undermine the cultural assumptions regarding the authority of the Assyrian imperial god while simultaneously elevating the authority and power of Yahweh (Perdue 2013, 174). As Mishra and Hodges remind us, though in more general terms, a postcolonial reading of Hosea demands that one identify where the power is in a particular political context and also how that power can be altered. Hosea focuses upon the ways in which imperial power can be subverted in order to elevate the power of the community by redefining itself around Yahweh as the dominant shared symbol of its collective identity and power (Mishra and Hodges 2005). Perdue finds a postcolonial connection in Hosea's message as an attempt to decolonize the mind of his audience.[7] In particular, he discusses how Hosea tries to decolonize the mind of his northern audience to help them reimagine what a community under Yahweh should be (Mishra and Hodges 2005, 86–87). I appreciate the possible inroads to ideological colonialism Perdue presents, yet he still doesn't escape presupposing the central importance of Yahweh *as the essence of a deity*—which tends to reframe the Minor Prophets as theological texts—rather treating the god as a culturally specific sociopolitical ideal.

Postcolonial readings are difficult among other books as well. Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, for instance, emphasize judgement as preceding restoration. Nogalski observes that Nahum's "two-layered" superscription (Nah 1:2–8, 9–11) leads into the message formula "thus says Yahweh" (v. 12) and introduces a promise of deliverance from the (Assyrian) empire (Nogalski 1993, 93). As part of the promise of hope, Nah 2:1 announces "good tidings" for Jerusalem and the defeat of the Assyrian empire (Nogalski 1993, 93). Regarding Habakkuk, Dietrich claims, "judgment happened not because the major power was insurmountable or because Yahweh was powerless. Instead, it was part of the plan of history to let the horrible enemy do as he liked for some time. God's own people should first be chastised, but then their tormentor should be wiped out" (Dietrich 2012, 149). For Dietrich, judgement in Habakkuk describes the experience of the community as the punishment of the deity. That is not an unfounded interpretation, as it can be found also in the Major Prophets and the Deuteronomistic History. Zephaniah, according to Wöhrle, presents a counterargument to the Deuteronomistic History that the "poor of the land" (Zeph 3:11–13) are the ones who escape judgment and will constitute the restored Israel (2008, 626). Sweeney writes that Zephaniah "is frequently read as an eschatological scenario of judgment and restoration for Israel and the nations of the world on the Day of YHWH" (Sweeney 2003, 1).

What these examples illustrate is that the portrayal of community is clearly linked to concepts of divine election. Alone, that is not much of an issue, but the connection between Yahweh and the Judeo-Christian God, which is a characteristic tendency in modern biblical interpretation, transforms that link into something more absolute: *the* people of God.[8] The identity of that people is described in ways that favor those who control the dominant tradition of biblical interpretation, historically Western colonial (p. 349) powers and their cultures. This is precisely the point that angers Cone (Cone 2011), among others, because it leaves little room for the minority perspective to give voice to itself outside the

linguistic and value systems of the dominant majority.[9] Put differently, we are guilty if our answer to "Who are the descendants of 'God's people' today?" names a single community or religious tradition.

The sequence of empires in Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah is Assyria, Babylonia, and Assyria. If the Minor Prophets were redacted in the late Persian period, the references to Assyria and Babylonia were likely reinterpreted as code words or metaphors (contrast Nogalski 1993, 106–107). Nogalski opines that the destruction of Nineveh served the redactor's purpose of offering hope to the exiled community that their imperial overlord would also fall (Nogalski 1993, 124). In agreement with Nogalski, Dietrich writes, "in the same way that Nahum predicted the end of Nineveh and this end actually came, so the end of Babylon, predicted by Habakkuk will come as well" (Dietrich 2012, 154), despite the sense of delay expressed in Nah 1:2b–3a (related to Mic 7:18–20) (Nogalski 1993, 107). Dietrich argues that Nahum presupposed the awareness of the larger corpus in order to emphasize Nahum as a book of comfort under imperial power (2012, 154). Nogalski, too, maintains that the redactor shaped Nahum to fit or continue the message of Mic 7:8–20 (Nogalski 1993, 110–111). According to Hillers, that message contained an emphasis upon divine forgiveness before divine restoration (Hillers 1984, 189).

Nahum 3 reminds its audience that while Ethiopia, Egypt, and Libya were the strength of the Assyrian empire, the empire too became an exile and shuffled into captivity. Infants were dashed to pieces at the head of every street. Lots were cast for nobles, and dignitaries bound in fetters (3:9–10). These actions were similar to those that described the experience of Israel going into exile (cf. Jer 13:13–27). For Nogalski, they also explain why Nah 3:8–17 may be best read as a "taunt song" juxtaposing the experience of the community with the eventual scattering of the Assyrian empire (3:18) (Nogalski 1993, 118). In strategies of postcolonial analysis, such a song might find a parallel in the spirituals of nineteenth- to twentieth-century United States, or even in the origin of the blues as forms of protest to hardships and the dehumanization imposed upon black bodies and communities (Cone 2011, loc. 479). However, if a parallel can authentically be made, it cannot stop at a comparison of song type or intention. It must also make the association of the Assyrian empire with the United States or the dominant cultural-religious (Judeo-Christian) traditions of the United States and, by extension, Western colonial powers upon whom those traditions depended. The tendency in biblical scholarship, however, is to find parallels with victimized communities and to be mute on any parallels with victimizers. Consequently, the colonial legacy that shaped modern interpretation is preserved when it reads the dominant cultural community into an association with the biblical "victims."

Similar to Nahum, Habakkuk also incorporates song in a ritual sense. The postscript at the end to the leader with the stringed instruments in 3:19 follows verses promising that trust and joy are appropriate in the midst of trouble because Yahweh will act. It reinforces the idea that Habakkuk emphasized a stabilized sociopolitical identity on the part (p. 350) of the community through an emphasis on ritual.[10] One can see the possible (intended) use of ritual, in the form of song, to encourage collective gathering and cohesion. Judith Sanderson states that while 2:20 may have been the original ending of the book,

Hab 3 was added to refocus the audience upon its possible restoration and vindication by Yahweh (Sanderson, 1998, 237). It emphasized the need for internal cohesion and the preservation of sociopolitical identity—a concern that can also be found in the unregulated expressions of hope and identity (song, dance, poetry, art, etc.) among colonized, or subaltern, communities in expressing hope in response to colonial oppression. It is perhaps there that a common ground between the experiences described by the Minor Prophets and the strategy of postcolonialism may be more firmly established.

Hope as a Postcolonial Connection?

Does, then, the prophetic emphasis upon hope retain a postcolonial point of reference? In Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, a prominent theme seems to be hope in the return to Yahweh. Malachi 3:7, for example, contains an echo of Zech 1:2–3 and 8:14, with the call "return to me and I will return to you." As Collins notes, Haggai is "very favorably disposed toward the temple cult" and "shows an interest in ritual purity" (Collins 2013, 43). Kessler calls the work "highly reconstructionist and restorationist" (Kessler 2002, 275). I would add, however, that Haggai discusses those ideas only as they relate to the political independence symbolized in the "return" of Yahweh. The reestablishment of the cult was one stage in a larger process of restoration that included the monarchy, part of what Kessler refers to as "provisional political accommodation" (Kessler 2002, 275). For Haggai, the temple symbolized the presence of the deity in that process (Assis 2002, 539–540; 534–535). The prophetic institution played a "vital role" in the reconstruction of the temple (Kessler 2002, 275). The idea of return implies a preexisting status and hierarchy, especially as it relates to the community and its national god. This concern, for Assis, occupies much of the focus of Haggai (Assis 2002, 532). Return also implies an awareness of a sociopolitical hierarchy that would govern the community in ways that were, in theory, familiar from the past. That awareness, for Kessler, would have been shaped by what he argues was the dominant hegemony of the returnees under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who "would have been in a position to promote their own interests" (Kessler 2002, 276).

Such Persian period interests were not simply theological events full of fanfare and worship of Yahweh/God as modern interpreters have often been wont to see. Drawing from C. A. Korpel, Goswell argues that references to "great king" (such as Mal 1:14) look for the political ascension of Yahweh (akin to a Mesopotamian emperor) (Goswell 2013, 634). What it meant to be Judean was constructed around this reestablished sociopolitical hierarchy. The exclusive nature of that identity is a hallmark of the biblical texts. Indeed, Assis argues that the attitudes toward the Samaritans conveyed in Haggai were a response to the peoples intermingling with them. The prophet (p. 351) maintained that restoration necessitated the exclusion, or distinction, of the community from others (Assis 2002, 538). The symbolic figure of this community and its concomitant hierarchy was Yahweh, and it is in that political sense that we should read passages such as Zech 14:9.[11]

Goswell notes that the "eschatological aspects" of Malachi (see 1:11) were "kingdom of God" language, which may be stated more pointedly as "political language describing a

kingdom under Yahweh" (Goswell 2013, 632–633). For Assis, both Haggai and Malachi react against the lowering of "nationalistic barriers," based on concerns that the blurring of the distinction between Israel and other nations was a problem for restoration (Assis 2002, 538–539). As Boda notes, those responsible for the redaction of the Haggai-Malachi corpus do not lose hope in the promised renewal of the prophet, priest, and king as a central and realizable component of restoration (Boda 2007, 131).

The emphasis upon divine origins or connection was meant to reassure the audience that the deity was still linked to the community and to inspire hope. Even though the community itself didn't have any material power that could rival the Persian empire, or any other empire, it could believe that its deity was fighting on its behalf. Despite its subordinated position before imperial power, however, the community under Zerubbabel may have enjoyed a dominant hegemony in local affairs—an example of a people subject to imperial power but not colonized by it (cf. Steinmetz 2014, 82).

Final Remarks

Are the Minor Prophets accessible to the experience of the subaltern? In answering this question, a few fundamental challenges must be acknowledged. One is that the dominant normative in biblical interpretation prioritizes idealizations of an ancient singular community consistent with a Judeo-Christian self-identification as a "righteous remnant," which are in turn consistent with Western imperial traditions of religion and biblical interpretation. For that reason, in part, to be accessible to the subaltern, the biblical text must be reappropriated and reinterpreted in ways that do not legitimate dominant norms of colonial cultures. Toward that end, postcolonial criticism must continue to challenge the normalization and the standardization of interpretation. And it must challenge the prioritization of a single community in the historical consciousness of the Bible and its interpretation.

The other challenge, then, is a historical one. The authors of the Minor Prophets do not completely, if at all, reflect the experiences of the colonized in the more modern world. Under the Babylonian and the Persian empires, communities were allowed to retain their senses of cultural identity; they were not "colonized" but were *displaced* by imperial authorities. Even Wörhle's questionable if well-intended conclusion that no restoration is imagined in the Book of the Four and that "Israel" in that compilation refers only to the poor of the land is a description of the thinking that arises from imperialism, not colonialism (Wörhle 2008, 626–627; contrast Steinmetz 204, 79–80). The (p. 352) Persians allowed local individuals to occupy positions of local and sometimes even regional power. What changed in the Persian period was where central authority lay. It did not boast of an experience of colonization.

In sum, a postcolonial approach to the Minor Prophets is possible, but it must challenge not only the dominant normative in interpretation but also the world that the Minor Prophets imagined, including the belief that a single community would be the sole beneficiary of that world due to the actions of God. The Minor Prophets are not the cultural

products of a subaltern "other," but their hope that a divine Other would hear and respond may offer a strategy for subaltern response. We must also be willing to accept that if we listen to the subaltern other, if we invite her out of the margins, we must submit ourselves to the challenges this other directs at us—we who benefit from the dominant traditions in academic discourse.

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Notes:

([1.]) Note also Bignall, who writes, “While power most certainly takes new forms today, we also continue to act within, against and according to a lasting legacy of colonial sociality. …It may also be the case that a concept of postcolonial practice could significantly assist in the creation of new assemblages of ‘the multitude,’ actively involved in the resistance to contemporary forms of globalisation and Empire” (2010, 2).

([2.]) Cf. the discussion of Artaxerxes’ “decree” and the success of the “returnees” over the “remainees” in Liverani (2005). Most scholars accept that the biblical texts from this period were largely the products of the “palace milieu,” which Liverani associates with the “returnees.”

([3.]) Nevertheless, territories weren’t without imperial presence and oversight, as can be seen in offices of the “king’s eyes and ears” (cf. *Hist.* 1.114; *Oec.* 4; *Cyr.* 8.6.16). See also the discussion in Balcer (1977).

([4.]) A theological strategy would be to presuppose the existence of God and interpret “community” on a symbolic rather than historically specific level (cf. Cone 1974; Sweeney 2012; Carr 2014; Brueggemann 1997). Models of the righteousness community are almost always framed by the cultural imagination of the dominant interpreting community as *the* model, or ideal, to embody. As Cone argues, this tendency to make the righteous ideal look like us is a common human one.

([5.]) See also Jackson (2015) who expands upon the idea in Sugirtharajah (2012, 67).

([6.]) Again, see Sugirtharajah (2012, 176–177); see also the general discussion of academic emphasis upon universality in Bhambra (2007, 1–8). Ntloedibe-Kuswani (2017) argues that the modern concept itself of God is a product of colonial rejection of colonized perspectives of the divine.

([7.]) For Perdue, “to decolonize the mind of the population of the north, the prophet repudiates the northern rulers, if not all rulers, for they led Israel into religious apostasy, the making of treaties with other nations, and the building of an army for conquest and defense. And they will not have the power to defend them from their enemies (13:10)” (2013, 188).

([8.]) In his study of Micah, D. Hillers cautions against the uncritical conflation of more Christian theological ideas upon the texts of the Hebrew Bible. For example, he finds that scholarly use of the vocabulary “millennium,” “millennarian,” and related forms, tends to promote a more technical sense of New Testament dogmatics for interpreting the Hebrew Bible (1984, 4–5).

([9.]) In cases of colonization, it closes the space for minority perspective, redefining the colonized as subordinate and in need of the “civilization” of the colonial power. Ntloedibe-Kuswan, for instance, writes, “part of the hijacking, Christianizing, westernizing, and gendering of African concepts of the Divine and of spiritual spaces—Africanity—was informed

by the colonizing ideology that believed in the superiority of the Christian God and religion over others or the local religions. The Christian God was held to be the only saving God in the world, while African religions, or any other religion for that matter, were seen as *praeparatio evangelica*" (Ntloedibe-Kuswan 2017, 98).

([10.]) Cf. a discussion on the purpose of ritual in Seligman and Weller (2012, 9, 67).

([11.]) Contra Goswell (2013, 630). See also Petersen (1984, 66–69), who argues that the temple for Haggai represented a new sociopolitical order.

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The Minor Prophets in Jewish Life Today

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay demonstrates the major roles the Minor Prophets play in shaping contemporary Jewish thought and practice. These books are read on or near occasions such as Yom Kippur, Chanukah, and Passover when more Jews are likely to attend synagogue than any other time of the year. The essay discusses passages from Amos, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Obadiah, Jonah, Zechariah, and Malachi and their significance as Haftarah portions for Sabbaths and festivals throughout the year. Their emphases on social justice, repentance, concern for the stranger, and the less fortunate of society make these issues vital concerns in Jewish life today. The essay underscores the prophets' ability, in the midst of often harsh messages, to cling to hope for a better future and point to a time when humanity will live in peace and harmony.

Keywords: Haftarah, social justice, Chanukah/Hanukkah, Passover, Yom Kippur, Jewish readings

(p. 359) A leading Jewish educator, Rabbi Adam Schaffer, director of the Sevran Center for Jewish Learning and Living in Woodland Hills, California, responded to a request for sources on the impact of the Twelve on modern Jewish life: "I love the Minor Prophets, (but) I don't really know any special resources about them. For better or worse, they're not a subject that often comes up in religious school outside of a few times they appear as a *Haftarah* (the prophetic portion read during a particular Shabbat during worship) reading" (personal correspondence).

I hope this inquiry into the contemporary significance of the Twelve Minor Prophets in Jewish life will be a useful resource, but it does not espouse an official Jewish perspective. Whenever two Jews discuss anything, one will surely hear three opinions.

For contemporary Jews, the Twelve so-called Minor Prophets are twelve separate entities but not of equal significance. This essay will focus on those referenced most frequently in contemporary Jewish circles. Although most scholars agree that Amos is historically the

earliest of the Twelve, I shall consider these prophets in the order in which they appear in Jewish versions of the Tanakh.

The Issue of Gender

While other writers of this volume will more fully explore the gender biases of the Minor Prophets, some brief comments are pertinent here. Had one been asked to write this essay in 1955, Habakkuk would require mention for the following line (2:20): “God is in His Holy Temple; earthly thoughts be silent now.” Jewish Sunday school students and their parents in the Baby Boom generation sang that line as the opening to a hymn that continued, “while with reverence we assemble and before His presence bow.” The song, whose composer is unknown, appeared (selection #7) in *the Union Hymnal* of Reform (p. 360) Judaism and in twenty-seven other Jewish and Christian hymn collections. In those days no one thought to refer to God in any way but in the masculine. In those days, too, the aura of worship was one of transcendence. Silence and awe were appropriate ways to reverence God’s majesty.

Over the years Jewish worship has moved toward informality and intimacy with the Eternal One. We want to “give God a hug” more than we want to stand silently in awe of the Eternal presence. No one sings that hymn any longer.

The impact of female rabbis and Bible scholars on the way we view the prophets is growing on “the Jews in the pews” (pews are becoming obsolete, too). In the Jewish scholarly world, Rachel Adler’s essay “The Battered Wife of God: Violence, Law and the Feminist Critique of the Prophets” (1998) is noteworthy. Other feminist critiques have called out the degradation of women in Hosea and other prophetic writings. As T. Drorah Setel writes:

> Although the prophet only makes use of a female personification of Israel in the first few chapters of Hosea, it is clear throughout the book that his underlying concern is to contrast Yahweh’s positive (male) fidelity with Israel’s negative (female) harlotry. In so doing, he introduces the themes of the degradation of females and their identification with the land and denies their positive role in human reproduction and nurturance. In his use of the cultural paradigm of marriage as an analogy for the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, Hosea transforms the earlier, material understanding of non-marital sexuality into an ethical transgression. (Setel 1985, 93)

These perspectives, unheard of a generation ago, will have increasing impact as time moves forward. Still, one hopes these important critiques will not undermine the inspiring messages of Hosea and others of the Twelve in contemporary Jewish life. As distasteful as many critics find the marriage metaphor in Hosea, it still points—as discussed later—to a positive message. Many scholars are content to view the marriage not as an actual occurrence. Real or not, in the days before mass communication media, Hosea’s graphic

depiction of his own marriage with its clearly symbolic names was an illustrative metaphor exhorting the People of Israel to change their ways.

As in the case of Hosea, one must acknowledge the anti-female bias in Micah. Julia M. O'Brien writes:

> Many interpreters understand Micah 1:7 as explicitly labeling Samaria a harlot and thus in following the pervasive tendency of prophetic literature to denigrate Israel and Judah as "whores" deserving of brutal punishment. From such a perspective Judy Fentress-Williams points to the danger of the metaphor for women and calls modern readers to challenge it. (O'Brien 2015, 11)

We have every reason to hope Professor O'Brien's call and the writings of others will increasingly resonate in Jewish circles. But these critiques will hopefully not diminish (p. 361) the power of Micah's inspiring exhortations as goads to each of us to pursue the overarching quest of contemporary Jewish life for a more peaceful, just, caring, and compassionate world for future generations to inhabit.

Another example is the stirring exhortation of Mal 2:10: "Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?" A half century ago, no one gave a second thought to the sexist language. Now it is troubling. But should those issues make us no longer able to appreciate Malachi's often quoted call for harmony and interfaith understanding? I hope not.

Hosea

The most familiar and most significant impact of Hosea on Jewish life is the use of his culminating message (14:109 [Heb. 14:2–10]) as the *Haftarah* for the Sabbath that falls between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Most often the Haftarah is directly connected to that week's portion read from the Torah, but those who established the synagogue readings considered these verses from Hosea so central to the message of the Days of Awe that they comprise the day's *Haftarah* despite the fact that the Torah reading for that particular Shabbat varies.

The ten days between Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) are the most solemnly sacred in the year for religious Jews. It is a time to give top priority to the task of self-examination and repentance. The Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is known as *Shabbat Shuva*, "The Sabbath of Repentance" or "The Sabbath of Return." This name comes from the appeal to s*huva* ("return") in Hos 14:1 (Heb. 14:2). Such an important lynchpin is the Hosea passage in this process that the first word, *Shuva*, gives its name, *Shabbat Shuva* (the Sabbath of Return), to the entire day: "*Shuva*, Return, O Israel, to the Eternal One your God because you have stumbled in your iniquities" (unless otherwise noted all translations in this essay are my own). Jews understand *shuva* not just in its literal sense of "Return" but also as "Repent."

A following verse, Hos 4:2 (Heb. 4:3), is particularly significant because it touches on the prophet's view of the sacrificial cult in ancient Israel and Judah. The cult (as we shall see) was also a concern of Hosea's eighth-century contemporaries, Amos and (taking the text at face value) Micah. The prophets' views on this subject inform an ongoing debate about the importance of ritual in Jewish life today.

Hosea continually inveighs against "Baalism." Baal was the chief god worshipped in Canaan and Phoenicia. Baal is a biblical synonym for idolatry. To explain the fascination for the pagan cult, Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that the idea of many gods is more easily understood than the concept of one invisible God. It is certainly easier to imagine a group of visible gods were responsible for the "countless numbers of people, places and things in the world" (Heschel 1962, 46). Israel's worship, as James Luther Mays noted, "had been Canaanized, and there was outright practice of the Baal cult" (Mays 1969b, 11–12).

Hosea condemned more than specific worship of Baal. He descried even legitimate Israelite cultic practices that were not accompanied by righteous behavior. Beyond (p. 362) outward piety, Hosea called for *daat Elohim.* The term connotes more than, as literally rendered, "knowledge of God." As Heschel explains it and as Jews strive to apply it to our lives today, *daat Elohim* means an awareness and a sensitivity to how God wants us to think inwardly and act outwardly" (Heschel 1962, 59–60). The late professor Herbert Chanan Brichto often reminded his students that when the prophets inveighed against "Baal" or idol worship, they did not only mean the worship of statues or physical images. They meant the abandonment of the priority of the one true God: the building of a just, caring, and compassionate society compared to the greed, exploitation, and selfishness associated with the worship of Baal (Brichto 1973).

In Jewish life today, Hosea symbolizes God's capacity to forgive and by implication of the importance of *Teshuvah* "repentance." Biblical law is clear: if a man divorces his wife and she marries another, he is forbidden to remarry her (Deut 24:1–4).Based on Hosea's metaphor of marriage to an unfaithful wife, God divorces Israel who "marries" Baal, but God will lure Israel back to the Eternal One and will take Israel back in love. A famous Midrash, a commentary on Hos 14:1 [Heb. 14:2], illustrates:

> "Return, O Israel, to the Eternal One your God."
>
> A king's son was 100 days distance from his father. His friends said to him, "Return to your father."
>
> He replied, "I cannot."
>
> His father sent a message to him that said." Go as far as you are able, and I shall come the rest of the way to you." (Midrash *Pesikta Rabbati, Shuvah Yisrael*, in Agnon 1965, 139)

So great is the power of repentance that the Midrash emphasizes that for its sake the Eternal One abrogates God's own divine law and "remarries" Israel saying, "Do *Teshuvah* and I will accept you even after you have had relations with other gods" (Agnon 1965, 139–140). One of several Talmudic passages emphasizes the point:

> Rabbi Levi: The power of Repentance is so great that it soars all the way to the throne of glory, as is said, "Return O Israel to the LORD thy God." (Hos 14:1 [Heb. 14:2]) (*b. Yoma* 86a)

Hosea has influence in other ways. In Jewish wedding ceremonies today, some brides circle their groom three times instead of the traditional seven, based on Hosea's stirring proclamation (2:19; Heb. 2:21) and the repetition three times of the verb *ve'arasteek*, "I will betroth." The five concepts mentioned in this verse, *tzedek*, *mishpat*, *hesed*, *rachamim*, and *emunah* (righteousness, justice, loving-kindness, mercy, and faithfulness), are points of discussion in many a premarital counseling session and the text of choice in many wedding ceremony sermons. The emphasis in Jewish tradition on promoting harmony and reconciliation between husbands and wives also has roots in the "betrothal conditions" articulated in Hosea and in God's willingness to take Israel back after she has proved unfaithful.

(p. 363) Joel

Joel plays a small role in Jewish life today. His date is less certain than that of Hosea, although scholarly consensus places him at a much later time, and his ministry was in Judah, unlike Hosea who prophesied to the northern kingdom. Like Hosea, he preached repentance: "Return (*shuvu*) to Me with all your heart" (2:12). In chapter 2, the prophet speaks glowingly of the restoration of Judah's fortunes when she returns in faithfulness to God: "Behold I will send you corn and wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied with these, and I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations" (2:19).

The most famous line in Joel has become a clarion call for Jewish youth movements: "I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions" (2:28 [Heb.3:1]). A well-known song of Debbie Friedman inspired by Joel is "And the Youth Shall See Visions" (1981).

Amos

Martin Luther King, Jr. could have made Amos famous. King quoted but did not cite the prophet in his final exhortation to the first Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) mass meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church, December 5, 1955, and as part of his more famous "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC, on August 28, 1963. If he had mentioned that "Let justice well up as waters and righteousness as a

mighty stream" comes from Amos (5:24), he would have put the prophet on the popular map.

As things stand, Amos ranks among the best known of the Twelve among contemporary Jews. When the Joseph Eisner Camp for Living Judaism opened in 1958, the first presentation of the drama workshop was a re-enactment by campers of Amos's crusade for social justice. In the non-Orthodox Jewish world, Amos represents the primacy of social action over ritual fidelity as the preeminent way to serve the Eternal One. Amos's exhortations (4:4-5; 5:21–27; 7:5–6, 10) make clear that the prophet decried the worship he saw at Beth El and Gilgal. To this day, the debate continues: did he reject religious ceremony in principle or did he reject only the insincere and hypocritical worship he witnessed? His dramatic flare still captures our imagination. As James Luther Mays noted, his "shocking parody of ecclesiastical language … must have sounded like irreverent blasphemy" (Mays 1969a, 74).

Amos's resonance today stems from the stark contrast between his concern for justice and his indictment of the cult as he witnessed it. The famous line let "justice well up like waters" is preceded by "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn offerings" (5:21). Amos remains a starting point for Jews today to debate the value of worship. Especially during the counterculture heyday of the 1960s, Amos's iconoclasm struck a deep chord in the heart of many a Jewish teenager. Those teenagers, (p. 364) inspired by the writing and activism of the late Albert Vorspan, grew up to value social justice over ritual fidelity.

As near contemporaries, Amos and Hosea are often seen as espousing the same values in opposite ways. Amos is viewed as the angry prophet, while Hosea is the tender and forgiving one. Heschel described the difference: "To Amos, the principal sin is injustice; to Hosea, it is idolatry. Amos inveighs against evil deeds; Hosea attacks the absence of inwardness" (Heschel 1962, 60). The teaching of Brichto, cited earlier, was in part a reaction to Heschel's perspective. Their combined influence continues to resonate strongly with Jews today.

Obadiah

Obadiah's influence confines itself to the *Haftarah* for the Torah portion *Va-yishlach*, the portion in which Jacob wrestles with the angel, receives the name Israel, and reconciles with his brother Esau. The book of Obadiah is an oracle against Edom, the nation Esau sires. Obadiah's portrayal of Edom as an evil society doomed to conquest and destruction underlies the negative perception of Esau that courses through rabbinic literature.

Rabbinic tradition (for reasons beyond the scope of this study) makes Jacob a *tzadik* (a wholly righteous man) despite the dastardly deeds of his youth and turns Esau into a murderous villain despite being the innocent victim of his brother's chicanery. If, our Sages reason, God "greatly despised" Esau (Obad 1:2), God had good reason. From there the roots of a misguided (in the opinion of this author) rabbinic tradition begin. Rabbi Debra

Pine also disagrees with the rabbis' treatment of Esau and succinctly summarizes the unfortunate rabbinic view that Obadiah (and later Malachi) helped launch:

> The Bible identifies [Esau] as the father of Edom and Amalek, two tribes that were enemies of the Hebrews. The Rabbis drew a further connection by associating Esau and Edom with Rome, thereby linking Esau to the destruction of Judaism. The midrash describes Esau as an idolater (*Genesis Rabbah* 63:6), a murderer (*Pirkei D' Rabbi Eliezer* 24), and one who spoke disrespectfully to his father (*Tanchuma*, Toldot 11), thus adding troubling details about Esau that are absent from the biblical text. (Pine 2002)

Jonah

Jonah is different from any other prophet. As Mark Kleiman writes:

> Yonah (Hebrew pronunciation of Jonah) is a strange prophet: without insight, without foresight, without compassion, and without courage. Most of all, he is without (p. 365) energy and without initiative: throughout he seems oddly passive. A modern diagnosis might be depression, or at least dysthymia. (Kleiman 2007)

Jews, however, read Jonah in its entirety on the afternoon of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), the most solemn Holy Day of the Jewish year. Orthodox Rabbi Yitzhak Etshalom considers Jonah "the critical text for the occasion" (Soloveichik n.d.). Reform Rabbi Steven Bob applies to Jonah the famous Rabbinic maxim that the Sage Ben Bag Bag applies to the Torah as a whole: "Turn it, turn it, for it contains everything. Look into it, grow old and worn over it, and never move away from it, for you will find no better portion than it" (*Pirke Avot* 5:26). Bob writes:

> While most people take these words to describe the Torah, for me they describe the book of Jonah. In this short book of the Bible we can find answers to the most important questions that people ask: Who am I? Why am I here? What provides meaning to my life? (Bob 2016, 160–161)

For Jews today, Jonah carries a vital message that speaks to the essence of Yom Kippur: if the Ninevites, a people synonymous with wickedness and depravity, could repent and if God accepted their repentance and renounced Divine punishment, then there is hope for us. The Talmud emphasizes: "Where penitent sinners stand, even the wholly righteous (i.e. those who have never sinned) cannot stand" (*b. Berachot* 34b). We, too, sin, and Jonah extends us a lifeline for forgiveness. We acknowledge we have done things we regret, but none of our misdeeds approach the evil of the people of Nineveh. If God could forgive them, then God can forgive us, too.

The corollary message is about second chances. Steven Bob places Jonah at the pinnacle of biblical books because he sees the story as his own. He flunked out of the University of

Minnesota because he did not go to class. He was living aimlessly in Chicago and not on the streets only because friends took him in. He writes:

> My friend Sam drove down from Minneapolis to see me. He spoke to me in his usual enthusiastic manner. He helped me see that I was nowhere doing nothing, but that it didn't have to be that way … The University was willing to let me try again. I took advantage of my second chance at the "U." I went to class and took my studies seriously. I graduated on time and went on to rabbinic school at the Hebrew Union College. God used a storm and a fish to save Jonah. My friend Sam's effort got me back on the path to a productive and meaningful life. He saved me. (Bob 2016, 22–23)

Jonah tried to run away from doing the will of the Eternal One. Jonah was given a second chance when the fish vomited him up. On Yom Kippur the entire Jewish world asks for a second chance for all the times we have turned away from the Godly impulse in each of us.

(p. 366) Jonah's influence in contemporary Jewish life is so extraordinary that many non-Orthodox congregations have scrapped all or most of the traditional liturgy for the afternoon of the Day of Atonement in favor of a study session on Jonah. Jews who neither attend synagogue nor study the Bible except for this one day during the year find in "the reluctant prophet" a key to examining their own shortcomings and recalculating the path of their lives.

Micah

Julia M. O'Brien captures the inspiration many contemporary Jews find in *Micah*:

> Advocates for social justice love to quote the book of Micah … (and) its plaintive insistence that what the Eternal One requires is to "do justice,
>
> and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). These words rally those who seek a more just world. Often paired with quotes from Amos, verses from Micah adorn the banners under which agents of change march forward. (O'Brien 2015, xxxix)

For many Jews of the Baby Boom and subsequent Jewish generations, the clarion calls of Micah and Amos are stronger connections to their religious heritage than any ritual observance.

Contemporary rabbis affirm the priority of social justice over "the cult" by pointing to the rhetorical question and the straw-man answers Micah proposes before the immortal utterance of "Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (6:8):

> With what shall I come before the Eternal One?

> And bow myself before God on high? Shall I present God with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
>
> Will the Eternal One be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?
>
> *Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* (6:6–7; emphasis mine)

The prophet speaks for contemporary Jews in categorically rejecting all of these practices. The last verse is italicized because of its usefulness in bolstering the claim rabbis frequently make in sermons for *Rosh Hashanah.* On that occasion they often preach on the "Binding of Isaac" (Gen 22) to some of the largest crowds that will hear them during the year. They frequently (and correctly, I believe) cite Gen 22 the story as a protest against the common pagan practice of human sacrifice, a practice that Scripture affirms (by more than twenty references) was difficult to uproot from the ancient Hebrew mind. Because his rejection of human sacrifice precedes Micah's most famous verse, it is often heard in synagogues on the morning of the Jewish New Year.

(p. 367) After repeating Isaiah's hope that one day we will "turn swords into plowshares … and never again train for war" (Isa 2:4), Mic 4:3–5 adds two significant original concepts. The first is the hope that one day we shall all sit under our vines and under our fig trees with nothing to cause us fear (4:4). No sentence better captures the highest hope of God, our people, and humanity as a whole that one day we will fashion a society without fear of hunger, homelessness, war, bullying, sexual harassment, global warming, or anything else. This stirring declaration of hope etched itself into American Jewish lore because George Washington chose to include it in his endorsement of religious diversity in his famous letter to the Hebrew congregation in Newport, Rhode Island (George Washington, correspondence, August 18, 1790).

Micah's second original addition to Isaiah's vision opens the door not only to tolerance, but to respect and affirmation for other religious faiths with the words: "For let every people walk each one in the name of its gods, but we shall walk in the name of the Eternal One, our God, forever and ever" (Mic 4:6). It is hardly an exaggeration to call this passage (along with Mal 2:10) the manifesto for inter-religious dialogue that congregations engage in today.

Micah also plays an important role in the popular Jewish ritual of *Tashlich* (Casting). On Rosh Hashanah, at some point after the morning service, Jews gather at a body of moving water and symbolically cast their sins away. The custom is based on the concluding lines of Micah, which are read at the water's edge:

> Who is a God like You who pardons sin
> and who forgives the transgression of the remnants of the Divine heritage?
> God does not retain anger forever
> but delights in *hesed* (merciful loving-kindness).
> The Eternal will again have compassion on us, will subdue our wrongdoings,

> and You will cast (*Tashlich*) all of our sins into the depths of the sea.
> You will show faithfulness …
> as You have sworn to our ancestors from ancient days. (7:18–20)

After the reading, participants might toss pebbles or breadcrumbs (now frowned upon for ecological reasons) into the water as a symbolic way of ridding themselves of past wrongdoings. The brief *Tashlich* ritual is an effective way of communicating, especially to children, the theme of the Days of Awe (between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) of repentance and renewal.

Zechariah

Apart from Passover, Jews celebrate Chanukah in some fashion more than any other religious occasion during the year. The popular legend of why Jews celebrate the festival (*b. Shabbat* 21b) is that when Antiochus's Syrian-Greek forces polluted the Temple in 165 BCE, the Maccabees led by Judah defeated Antiochus's army and drove them out of (p. 368) Jerusalem. They immediately wanted to rekindle the eternal flame on the altar but found they only had enough of the consecrated olive oil to last for one day and it would take a week to make the special oil. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days.That lovely legend is as much the real reason Jews celebrate Chanukah, just as Santa Claus is the reason some Christians celebrate Christmas.

The real story is more complex. King Antiochus had been content to leave the Jews alone as long as they paid their taxes and maintained peace in the streets. Armed conflict arose, however, between Jews loyal to their religion and those who sought profitable business connections with wealthy Greek merchants. When Antiochus intervened, he outlawed all Jewish practice, polluted the Temple with idols of Greek gods, and offered sacrifice of pigs (a forbidden animal for Jews). After three years, the Maccabees drove the foreign troops out of Jerusalem. It was the first armed struggle in history for the cause of religious liberty. At the rededication of the temple, the Maccabees proclaimed an eight-day celebration not because of a cruse of oil but in honor of the previously proscribed harvest festival of *Sukkot*.

The *Haftarah* for the Sabbath during Chanukah is Zech 2:14–4:7. The seven-branched golden menorah described at the beginning of Zech 4 is sufficiently reminiscent of the nine-branched *Chanukiah* (Chanukah lamp) to forge an association between Zechariah's vision and the Festival of Lights. The rebuilt temple Zechariah foresaw was inspiration for restoring the Temple polluted by Syrian-Greek troops.

The contemporary significance of the passage goes further: God's promise to the returning exiles in Judea that the temple would be restored symbolizes the future of Jewish life: "Not by might nor by power but by My spirit says the Eternal One of hosts" (4:6). Many thousands of Jewish youth know this passage by heart and find inspiration in it due to "Not by Might," the popular song on the 1974 album by that name by Debbie Friedman.

The words have made their way from song sessions at Jewish camps and youth retreats into mainstream synagogue worship. The lyrics:

> Not by might, and not by power,
> But by spirit alone (“*ruach*!”)
> Shall we all live in peace. (2x)
> The children sing,
> the children dream,
> And their tears will fall,
> But we’ll hear them call,
> And another song will rise (3x)
> (ending) Not by might, not by power, shalom!

Chanukah, bolstered by Friedman’s popularization of Zechariah’s teaching, is an important reminder to Jews that no outside force has ever destroyed us. We are most threatened though when we, like the assimilationists in Judaea in the second pre-Christian century and many others throughout history, abandon our heritage in the quest for acceptance in the gentile world.

(p. 369) On the 1972 album “Sing Unto God,” Debbie Friedman contributed *Ba-Yom Ha-Hu*, a musical version of Zech 14:9. This verse was chanted in synagogues for hundreds of years in many different ways long before Friedman was born.

> As it is said, the Eternal One shall rule over all the earth. On that day the Eternal One shall be one and God’s name shall be One. (14:9)

Jews sing this verse in the concluding section of every synagogue service. It epitomizes the eternal hope that the world can be better than it is and that one day we will realize the messianic hope of a world marked by justice, caring, and compassion for all.

The verse should not mean everyone would worship as we do.

Instead of demanding that all call our Gd their G-d, these words can mean that *on that day* we will know that all the different names different peoples call G-d … refer to the same One. Without abandoning our particular understandings, we will teach each other the distinctive viewpoint that belongs to each of us (Leo Fuchs, sermon, Hebrew Union College chapel, Jerusalem, February 3, 2019).

Malachi

Malachi appears in two *Haftarah* readings during the Jewish year. The first relevant passage is “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (Mal 1:3). Here Malachi joins Obadiah in fueling the prevailing rabbinic outlook of vilifying Esau.

Malachi’s other contribution to contemporary Jewish life is far more positive. We read the concluding passage of his book on the Sabbath before Passover. That Sabbath is known as *Shabbat Ha-Gadol* (The Great Sabbath) for two reasons. First it is “Great” because it is

the Shabbat before our liberation from Egypt, viewed as the enabling event of all subsequent Jewish history. Also, the word *Ha-Gadol* (the great) describes the glorious event Malachi predicted, “the great and awesome Day of the Eternal One” (4:5 [Heb. 3:23]). What Malachi actually meant by such a day is open to debate, but its significance for subsequent Jewish thought is clear. He foresaw a messianic time when parents and children will reconcile all differences, when human conflicts will cease, and when the world will then live in peace and harmony.

Why Malachi in the fifth pre-Christian century conjured Elijah from the ninth (with no prophetic mention in between) as the herald of such a time is uncertain, but the impact of the idea on subsequent Jewish (as well as Christian) thought is incalculable. In the Bible, Elijah stories occupy a fraction of the space allotted to Moses, but there are more *Midrashim* about Elijah than Moses or any other biblical character. The dozens of Elijah stories that appear in Midrash gave hope and inspiration to countless generations of Jews whose real-life living conditions were often marked by poverty, persecution, and exile. Elijah, as enshrined in Midrash, kept alive the hope of our people, individually and collectively, that new and better times were ahead.

(p. 370) Jews today reference Elijah’s role on four ritual occasions:

- When a boy is circumcised, a chair is set aside for Elijah, symbolically expressing the hope that he will visit the ceremony and announce the newborn child as Redeemer of the world.
- At the end of Shabbat, Jews conduct a *Havdalah* (Separation) ceremony to return to the work-a-day world. Shabbat is thought of as a foretaste of the messianic time of peace and harmony. During *Havdalah* we sing for *Eliayahu Ha-Navi* (Elijah the Prophet) to express the hope that he will miraculously make the peace and harmony of Shabbat a permanent reality for all humanity.
- The same thought underlies Elijah’s most familiar role as the hoped-for guest for whom we open the door at the end of the Passover Seder.
- Finally, the dramatic end of Yom Kippur recalls Elijah’s glorious triumph over the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. (I Kgs 18:19–39)

Today, most Jews do not hope for Elijah to miraculously redeem the world, but we do cherish his role at the birth of a child, the end of Shabbat, in the Passover Seder, and at the end of Yom Kippur. These are among Judaism’s most important rituals. Also we find in the Midrashic stories recounting his exploits inspiration for our efforts today to work for a better world. The marvelous seed Malachi planted at the end of his book has sprouted and continues to sprout in wonderful ways.

Conclusion

In Judaism, the “Minor Prophets” are not minor at all. They inspire our efforts for social justice, goad us to sincere repentance for our wrongdoings, and fuel the unquenchable hope of the Jewish people that the world can be better than it is.

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The Minor Prophets in Christianity: Habakkuk as a Model for Posttraumatic Christian Prophetic Preaching

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Abstract and Keywords

Due to Habakkuk's ahistoricity, communities and interpreters throughout the ages have applied the prophetic book to their present situations and concerns. This essay follows in the interpretive footsteps of those who have come before by considering how Habakkuk might be a valuable resource to contemporary posttraumatic prophetic preachers in this present moment. Given the rising prevalence of mass shootings and gun violence in the United States, alongside seemingly endless occurrences of natural disasters, abuse, hate crimes, and other traumatic incidents, it is no longer a question of *if* a preacher or pastor will need to address trauma or a traumatized congregation, but *when*. The essay argues that Habakkuk may serve as a valuable resource to address contemporary homiletical concerns, specifically how preachers might conceive of "posttraumatic prophetic preaching" in the midst of congregations experiencing communal trauma. In particular, Habakkuk may help preachers as they seek to locate themselves and reflect on their communal responsibilities after a traumatic incident as well as provide an eschatological theological orientation from which to preach.

Keywords: Habakkuk, trauma, preaching, eschatology, watchpost, homiletics, violence

(p. 373) ONE of the most puzzling features of the book of Habakkuk is its resistance to a precise dating. Many scholars of prophetic literature attempt to connect each prophetic book to a particular time period.[1] Identifying the historical moment can be done by utilizing evidence about the prophet's life, examining the context of the message, or considering the content of the message. Habakkuk grants few clues in all of these areas.[2]

Although many scholars have attempted to locate the book's historical setting close to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the lack of an explicit date has allowed interpreters throughout the ages to apply the book to their own situations.[3] Pesher Habakkuk from Qumran applies the predictions and events of the book to the Qumran community in constructing the community's self-identity as a special group called out by

God in the eschatological End of Days (e.g., 1QpHab i.13; vii.4–5; vvii.10–11; Lim 1990, 185). This text was so central to the Qumranites that several of their ideological terms ("the Teacher of Righteousness," "the man of the lie," and the "Wicked Priest") come directly from their interpretation of this book and were used to justify their sectarian positions (Bernstein 2000, 648). *The Lives of the Prophets* (first century CE) expands on the little-known character of Habakkuk by portraying him as delivering food to Daniel in exile and then prophesying about the light and glory of the temple after it is destroyed by the Romans. These texts emphasize the role that Habakkuk played in responding to and reflecting on the Babylonian exile by depicting one of the most mysterious prophets as active within the exilic time community. Bel and the Dragon, a Greek addition to the book of Daniel, continues this notion of Habakkuk as chef by once again depicting him as a cook, divinely ordained by God, who provides food for Daniel and the other Babylonian exiles (Lim 2015, 1044–1045).

(p. 374) The lack of precision in dating also allowed early Christians to apply this book directly to their own theology and historical situations. Paul used Habakkuk in Rom 1:17 as his theme for the letter, using the prophet as explanation and motivation for eschatological hope during the crisis of the delayed return of Christ (Gowan 2007, 709). Central to Paul's use of Habakkuk was his citation of the LXX version of Hab 2:4b: "the righteous will live by faith." In both places where the verse is cited (Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11), Paul emphasizes the salvation offered by God to those who are deemed righteous. The letter to the Hebrews also demonstrates the outsized role of LXX Hab 2:3–4 in Christian messianic imaginations, where it emphasizes the nearness of the return of Jesus. The Luke-Acts tradition also builds on the eschatological framework of Habakkuk by highlighting the surprising nature of God's actions in history (i.e., that an enemy nation could be used by God). These early Christian works show that the eschatology displayed in Habakkuk was particularly important for understanding claims about Jesus and his delayed return.

Continuing in this tradition of interpretation, the early church interpreted Habakkuk in a Christological sense, connecting the book to the birth of Christ (Novatian [250–? CE], *De trinitate*, Hab 3:3); Jesus's fulfillment of various prophecies (Eusebius [260–340 CE], *Demonstratio evangelica*, Hab 2:3; Cyril of Alexandria [444–? CE], Hab 2:3–4); and the proclamation of Jesus's divine power (Augustine [354–430 CE], *De civitate Dei*, Hab 3). Much later, the reformer Martin Luther emphasized the Pauline reading of Habakkuk by focusing on the nature of salvation through faith and encouraged an eschatological orientation that was expectant of Christ's return. John Calvin, on the other hand, moderated his readers' eschatological expectations by historicizing the book to the period of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (Neef 2015, 1051).

Modern interpreters continue to use Habakkuk for thinking through questions of theodicy. Orthodox and Reform Jewish writers, for instance, relate the book to questions that arise from the Holocaust (Rosenbaum 2015, 1050). The chaos depicted in the book seems to represent a challenge to the order of creation itself.

In the majority of the interpretations presented here, interpreters assume an orientation to the book in which they are living in the eschatological tension the book envisions. Whether the tension results from radical sectarian disagreements as in the Qumran or the christological application of the book to various Christian settings, the expectation is that Habakkuk can be used to understand one's present moment. In this way, the book's ahistoricity functions less as a hindrance to making meaning of the book and more as an invitation to reading the book's message in a way that knows no chronological boundaries. Its lack of an expressed historical date allows for it to be applied easily to various life settings.

Following in the interpretive footsteps of those who have come before, this essay answers Habakkuk's invitation by considering how the book might be a valuable resource to contemporary posttraumatic prophetic preachers in this present moment. John McClure defines prophetic preaching as "an imaginative re-appropriation of traditional narratives and symbols for the purpose of critiquing a dangerous and unjust present situation and providing an alternative vision of God's future" (2007, 117). Alongside (p. 375) the rising prevalence of mass shootings and ongoing gun violence in the United States, communities regularly experience natural disasters, abuse scandals, racism, hate crimes, and too many other traumatic incidents to count. It is no longer a question of *if* a preacher or pastor will need to address trauma or a traumatized congregation but *when*. Such work is difficult both because of the preacher's proximity to the traumatic event and because preachers often feel a tension between the task of providing comfort while also responding prophetically to the "dangerous and unjust present situation."

Though often overlooked and appearing only once in the Revised Common Lectionary, Habakkuk may serve as a valuable resource to address contemporary homiletical concerns, specifically how preachers might conceive of "posttraumatic prophetic preaching" in the midst of congregations experiencing communal trauma. In particular, Habakkuk may help preachers as they seek to locate themselves and reflect on their communal responsibilities after a traumatic incident as well as provide a theological orientation from which to preach.

As we approach Habakkuk as a "posttraumatic prophetic preaching" resource, we will begin by identifying the features of the text that make Habakkuk a reliable guide in addressing trauma. Then we will move to examine Habakkuk's location in the midst of his own traumatic events and how this might guide preachers in understanding their location amid traumatized communities. Finally, we will explore Habakkuk's eschatological orientation and imagine how such an orientation might inform contemporary posttraumatic prophetic preaching. Ultimately, Habakkuk suggests that posttraumatic prophetic preaching requires an active presence in the wounded community and an eschatological orientation that lives in the tension of the present and the unknown future.

Habakkuk as Valuable Traumatic Model

Habakkuk can serve as a guide for reimagining a prophetic response in the wake of trauma because the text vividly depicts a communal experience of traumatic destruction and cuts to the very heart of the nature of trauma. Habakkuk 1 begins with a lamenting cry from the prophet and a vivid description of a people and land decimated by violence:

> O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? … Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.(v. 6)

This violence is broad and communal as the conquerors "seize dwellings not their own" (1:6) and "gather captives like sand" (1:9). The language is vivid, as the assumed voice of the LORD describes what the "Chaldeans" will do (1:5–11) and as the prophet responds (1:2–4, 12–17). The prophet complains with the familiar cry of "how long?" and grapples with the reality that this violence appears a never-ending reality (1:16–17).

(p. 376) The first chapter of Habakkuk is remarkable not only in its vivid description of traumatic violence but also in the way it grapples with the very experience of trauma. In this way, the complaint and cries of Habakkuk might resonate deeply with those who have endured traumatic events as Habakkuk wrestles to bring language to the inexpressible experience of trauma. As Kimberly Wagner articulates in her article "What Do We Preach?: Trauma, Lament, and Social Action," trauma may be defined as "an internal blow or wounding of the mind and spirit that occurs when an experience cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into preconceived meaning-making frameworks. Put another way, trauma is defined by the ungraspable and incomprehensible nature of the experience" (2018, 9). This "internal blow or wounding" can happen at both the individual and communal level. People may encounter collective trauma, a wounding of the fabric of the community that leads to a breakdown of the ties that bind a community together, even as they experience individual traumatic wounding (Erikson 1995, 185). Indeed, collective trauma is distinct from and more than the collection of individual traumas, though each may feed and impact the other. Whether experienced communally and/or individually, trauma is a wounding marked by incomprehensibility. According to Cathy Caruth, trauma is something that "brings us to the limits of our understanding" (1995, 4). The experience of trauma sits outside of one's ability to make sense of events or fit the experience (acute or perpetual) into logical frameworks built on past experiences. The story an individual has told about life or a community no longer functions to make meaning of what has occurred, and it is *that* incongruity that leads to the subjective experience of trauma.[4]

The book of Habakkuk expresses this incomprehensibility both in the words attributed to the prophet and those attributed to YHWH, especially in the first chapter. The questions Habakkuk raises in his complaint and lament—questions about God's absence (1:2), God's purpose for allowing such violence (1:3), God's faithfulness (1:12), and God's justice (1:13)—all point to the incomprehensibility of the traumatic event. Even in the words believed to be attributed to God (though such attribution is not explicit), YHWH names the

inconceivable nature of the experience, saying that “a work is being done in your days that you would not believe if you were told” (1:5). Even the LORD confirms the event as “traumatic,” as it is outside the capacity of “the nations” to conceive of it or fully comprehend.

This lack of comprehensibility that marks an experience as traumatic and leads to the subjective experience of trauma generally leads to a collapse in an individual’s or community’s ability to trust structures, people, institutions, or even metaphysical realities upon which they relied before the traumatic experience. After all, those narratives, people, and structures have been proven unreliable in helping people to navigate the world or make meaning under the present traumatic circumstances. The stories they have told and once used to manage and make meaning of the world are rendered inadequate and therefore untrustworthy under the weight of trauma.

In light of the experience of traumatic violence and destruction, Habakkuk expresses this failure of and distrust in those structures on which he had previously depended, and he struggles in his understanding of God. Habakkuk declares in the face of such (p. 377) “destruction and violence” that “the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous—therefore judgment comes forth perverted” (1:4). There is some scholarly debate about whether this is a collapse in justice due to how far the violence has gone or if the destruction and violence themselves are a perversion of justice. Either way, the trauma caused by such violence and destruction has led the prophet to perceive a perversion, or even collapse, of justice (Sweeney 1991, 66–67). Additionally, while reciting what he knows to be true about YHWH (1:12b–13a), Habakkuk struggles to understand why God has not lived up to his understanding and experience. He cries out, “Are you not from of old, O LORD my God, my Holy One? … why do you look on the treacherous, and are silent when the wicked swallow those more righteous than they?” (1:12a, 13b). In the face of this traumatic violence, Habakkuk’s understanding of who God is and how God might respond is challenged, and his faith in the God he has known threatens to topple under the weight of the trauma. In the face of such disaster, justice appears perverted and God does not respond in the way that Habakkuk expects. As a result, he questions the steadfastness of the law and begins to question whether the God “from of old” that he has trusted is still reliable.

The experience of trauma is marked by incomprehensibility and a subsequent loss of faith and trust in structures, persons, and even metaphysical realities that have previously helped people to navigate the world manageably and meaningfully. Habakkuk evidences these experiences in his complaint and cries to God, noting the unfathomable nature of the violence, a perceived collapse in the structures of law and justice, and a breakdown in his conception of God. Given Habakkuk’s vivid description of the traumatic violence and destruction encountered by his community as well as his grappling with the incomprehensibility and trust-deteriorating nature of trauma, Habakkuk has the potential to be a helpful model for preachers to reimagine both their location (or role) and message as posttraumatic prophetic preachers.

Location of the Preacher

As a potential guide for posttraumatic prophetic preaching, Habakkuk offers insight for the location of the preacher in communities experiencing trauma. As members of the communities in which they serve, preachers often experience the traumatic events alongside their congregations even as they are expected to make sense of such events. They are simultaneously wounded with the congregation and also called upon to speak to the wounded community. This, combined with the tension between offering comfort and a prophetic word, puts the preacher in an uncertain and perilous position.

Under normal circumstances, preachers are often implored to follow the adage: “Preach from your scars, not from your wounds.” Put another way, preachers should only offer stories or preach from places that have experienced some healing in order to not place the congregation in the position to have to care for their wounded preacher. However, in the wake of communal trauma, if preachers are truly a part of and woven (p. 378) into the life of their communities, they will experience the same traumatic impacts as their congregations. But they will be expected to preach, often that very day or the following Sunday. They will have to offer words as wounded preachers to and among wounded congregations.

Habakkuk finds himself in a similarly precarious situation precipitated by his traumatic reality. Habakkuk expresses his woundedness alongside the nations, asking God, “Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise” (1:3). In response to his belief that God fails to act, Habakkuk positions himself at the watchpost. After his psalm-like complaint in chapter 1, in chapter 2 Habakkuk declares, “I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me and what he will answer concerning my complaint” (2:1).

The role of the prophet as a watcher is common in Hebrew prophetic literature. Indeed, the book of Habakkuk is described as a vision (*hazon*), which he sees. Throughout the book, Habakkuk’s prophetic visions are contrasted with the appearances of the natural world by the terms *navat* (“look”) and *ra’ah* (“evil”). Other prophets such as Ezekiel (3:17; 33:7) and Hosea (9:8) understand their role as a watcher, but many scholars argue that within Habakkuk the term “watchpost” likely indicates a Levitical office (2 Chr 6:6; 8:14; 35:2) or a place in which one experiences a prophetic vision (Isa 21:1–10).[5] The majority of uses of this phrase indicate priestly offices and responsibilities as well as point to the requirements set forward by YHWH. For this reason, Sweeney (1991, 70) understands the prophet to be someone closely associated with the temple cult, perhaps even a ritual functionary. Sweeney’s broadly accepted thesis receives support from the complaint terminology that the prophet shares with the Psalms, the psalm-like structure of Hab 3, and connections with postexilic offices of the Levites (Sweeney 1991, 70; Mathews 2012, 75). Some scholars have suggested that the work is a cultic lament or an imitation of a cult liturgy.[6] Rashi understands this role to be based on Habakkuk’s expectation that YHWH would answer him (discussed more later) (*b.Taan* 23a). In this understanding of the

"watchpost," the prophet stands at his appropriate liturgical station to mediate between God and the people, with an expectation that YHWH will respond.

Another possible interpretation is that Habakkuk's position at the "watchpost" indicates a stance on the walls or towers of the city as he watches the invasion approach. Some interpreters have taken this to be indicative of his location in or near the traumatic events. If the terminology is martial in this way, then the prophet participates in the event as one with the people of Judah, watching in horror at the destruction of life around him (Gafney 2017, 81–82). Whether this language is cultic or indicates a position on the walls, the prophet witnesses the trauma of his community, experiences the trauma alongside the community, and stands ready in his priestly role to receive a word from God and offer a response.

Habakkuk's location on the watchpost suggests to contemporary posttraumatic preachers that the place for the prophet is to be in the midst of the people while yet occupying the (perhaps familiar) priestly role. In the wake of trauma, the very act of liturgical (p. 379) leadership may be prophetic. The prophetic preacher should not shy away from the call to lead and speak to the people but, following the model of Habakkuk, be willing to remain with the people in their woundedness. In other words, Habakkuk advises posttraumatic prophetic preachers to remain in the tension between sharing in the suffering of the community and speaking to and on behalf of the community when summoned.

Eschatological Tension/Orientation

This location at the watchpost not only offers a positioning for the preacher in a co-wounded yet liturgical and priestly role but also might suggest a theological orientation for prophetic preaching in the wake of trauma. Rhetorically, the prophet's location standing at the watchpost indicates his readiness for a response. Habakkuk's language about his interactions with God is rather intense. He refers to his speeches as "a cry of distress" (1:2) and a protest (2:1).[7] The prophet's expectation is expressed explicitly: "I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me and what he will answer concerning my complaint" (2:1).[8] The prophet's words are eschatologically oriented, as seen in his anticipation that YHWH will provide him with a response. This orientation illustrates his patience and expectation even in a time of great crisis. The tension between the crisis and the expectation necessarily creates a space in which the prophet must remain with one foot in the realities of his wounded community and the other in his belief that God can and should respond.

Habakkuk's expectation of God's response is grounded in his understanding of the covenantal relationship between Israel and God. Janzen frames Habakkuk's experience within an understanding that, as a covenant partner with God, Habakkuk participates in a reality that is a "radically temporal field of power originating in the aboriginal life of God ('I will be who I will be') and in which all are given a share" (1982, 412). As a covenant partners, both YHWH and Habakkuk wait and act reciprocally. In the words of Janzen, "The power of action is shared; and the power of passion is shared. Each is called upon to

act; and each is called upon to wait and to suffer the acts of others" (1982, 413). As a result of this eschatological orientation, Habakkuk's complaint becomes even stronger because, according to 1:3, YHWH is not fully participating in the Judah's suffering, adding insult to injury. Nevertheless, Habakkuk anticipates that YHWH's justice is only delayed and is coming (Jacobson 2004, 42). As a cultic actor, prophet, and participant in Judah's strife, Habakkuk's future orientation is one based in expectation and hope of God's response, whatever it may be.

YHWH's response requires Habakkuk to remain in this eschatological tension. "If it seems to tarry," responds YHWH, "wait for it" (2:3b). Habakkuk's demands and cries for justice go without immediate response, and the answer to his complaint comes in a rather surprising form. Rather than a word of reconciliation, Habakkuk receives a vision of the fearsome Divine Warrior who tramples out of heaven and brandishes his weapons **(p. 380)** against the cosmos. Habakkuk's response is not one of relief but one of fear and trembling (3:16) before it turns to acceptance.[9] YHWH's sovereignty covers the whole earth and all of the actors in it; ultimately because of his rule, righteousness and justice, as well as those who *are* righteous, will prevail (Sweeney 1991, 81).

Habakkuk invites those preaching in the wake of communal trauma not only to take their priestly position at the watchpost but also to orient themselves theologically in the midst of what *is* and in the promise of what God might *yet do*. Those preaching in the aftermath of trauma must preach in the eschatological tension between naming what has been lost and holding out hope for God's redemptive promised action. Preachers need to hold the tension between the reality of brokenness and the anticipation of hope, to sit in the eschatological gap between the painful truth of the present circumstance and the promises of God—no matter how distant or hidden they may seem. The temptation may be to collapse one into the other. On one hand, the preacher may be tempted to offer only a message of assurance that "God's got it" or all will be well "in the sweet by and by"—a sort of theological bandage that might ring in the ears of traumatized individuals as a kind of utopian escapism *or* suggest a damaging narrative that convinces the listener that her experience of forsakenness or brokenness is beyond the healing work or presence of God. On the other hand, preachers might be tempted to remain only in the reality of suffering and fail to point toward the promises of God that still remain, even if God's presence is not immediately apparent (Wagner 2018, 10).

Like Habakkuk, the preacher in the midst of trauma may only be able to hold out expectation that God is still present and might yet respond, when the good news of God's redemption "seems to tarry." While the disorienting suffering brought on by a traumatic experience must be named, honored, and recognized, Habakkuk models for preachers what it might look like to preach in the eschatological tension. Habakkuk, at his watchpost, is completely grounded (literally "standing among") the destruction and traumatic reality that has occurred. He calls it what it is—violence, a perversion of justice, destruction—and yet orients himself (and preachers) toward what God may yet do.

Conclusion

Answering the interpretive invitation extended by Habakkuk's ahistoricity, we assert that Habakkuk offers a rich model for posttraumatic prophetic preaching. Offering vivid and profound articulations of the experience of trauma, Habakkuk allows us to join with interpreters through the ages in finding resonances with our current circumstances. Along with modeling lament that names the painful and disorienting traumatic reality, Habakkuk provides a resource for preachers to think both about their location and theological orientation in the aftermath of communal trauma. Habakkuk encourages preachers to locate themselves both in and among the hurting community, while still recognizing the prophetic work of their priestly roles. From that location of trauma, Habakkuk then invites preachers to preach in the eschatological tension between the (p. 381) loss of what has been and anticipate the possibilities of what God may yet do. In doing so, Habakkuk invites all of us to broaden our imagination as to the work of a prophet—and prophetic preacher—in the wake of trauma. With the present reality of the prevalence of communal trauma, preachers may look to Habakkuk as a resource for how to approach posttraumatic prophetic preaching as they seek to critique a dangerous and unjust present while leaning toward an alternative vision of God's future.

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Notes:

([1.]) This should not be overstated since some books, most obviously Isaiah, are clearly the product of multiple authors in different historical periods.

([2.]) The origins of the name “Habakkuk” are unknown and possibly East Semitic and the superscription mentions no king or event that might help with dating. The origins of Habakkuk in Akkadian *ḫambaququ*/*ḫabbaququ* have enjoyed broad acceptance since Franz Delitzsch (1886, 84). Jewish traditions, however, link the name to the Shunammite woman’s son in 2 Kgs 4:6, since Elisha announces to the woman that she will embrace (*hobeqet*) a son (Vanderhooft 2011, 351).

([3.]) Traditionally, the historical crisis that precipitates the book has been understood as the Babylonian ascendency between 605 and 39 BCE. See Hab 1:5–11 (esp. v. 6) (Gafney 2017, 76 and Roberts 1991, 83).

([4.]) Wagner (2018, 9) further argues that this incomprehensibility can be understood as a dual loss of narrative temporality and coherence. Due to the way the experience sits outside of the scope of one’s understanding, the traumatic experience becomes a perpetual present that disrupts the chronology of one’s own narrative sense of self. Likewise, such incomprehensibility leads to a narrative that can no longer hold together to make sense of the world or help the traumatized person reliably or meaningfully navigate the world.

([5.]) This phrase is used as the “charge” or responsibilities of priests in Lev 18:30; 22:9; 8:35; Num 3:7, 31; 4:28; 8:26; 18:3; Deut 11:1; Ezek 44:8, 16; 48:11; 2 Chr 7:6; 8:14; 31:17; and 35:2. It appears as YHWH’s command in Deut 11:1; 1Kgs 2:3; Zech 3:7; and Mal 3:14. It is used in connection with “guard” in Num 1:53 and 2 Kgs 11:5–7. In Exodus, the word is used to refer to the “watch of the night,” a point at which the people are to slaughter the Passover lamb (12:6). The word also refers to a physical place within the organization of a city wall or even the entirety of the fortifications themselves (Isa 21:8; Zech 9:3; Ps 60:11; 2 Chr 8:5; 11:5).

([6.]) For scholars who suggest that the text is a cultic lament, see Mowinckel (1923, 27–29); Jeremias (1970, 103–107); Watts (1975, 221–22); and Sweeney (2000, 454). For scholars who see the text as an imitation of a cult liturgy, see Fohrer (1985, 159–167).

([7.]) The terminology in 1:3 may refer to Habakkuk’s “disputation” (*rib*) and a “contention” (*madon*). Francis Anderson makes the case that verse 1:3 is not a reference to general complaints in the land but the prophet’s own complaint against YHWH (Anderson 2001, 117). In wisdom literature, *madon* and *rib* often appear in parallel and function as the antithesis of wisdom and self-control. In Ps 55:9 [Heb. 55:10], *rib* is paired with *hamas*, “violence.” In prophetic literature, the term *rib* generally functions as a type of discourse in which YHWH and the prophet indict the people for their unfaithfulness and

idolatry. In such cases, the legal overtones of the term are unmistakable. In Habakkuk, the language is so forceful that Targum Jonathan attempts to soften it by making Habakkuk's terminology a "request" (Gafney 2017, 89).

(8.) It is possible to translate the phrase "to me" (*bi*) as "through me." Many commentators do this on the grounds that the prophet speaks on behalf of YHWH (e.g., Anderson 2001 193). However, the rhetoric of the passage, which centers on Habakkuk's expectation for a response, suggests that YHWH responds *to* the prophet directly. Indeed, YHWH responds with a word and a vision directed *to* Habakkuk in the very next verse (Gowan 1976, 26).

(9.) While some have tried to unlink chapter 3 from chapters 1 and 2 by appealing to form-critical arguments, Sweeney (1991, 64–65) has shown that the book is far more connected in its final form than the consensus contends.

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The Minor Prophets in Modern Culture

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The Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets
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Abstract and Keywords

This essay considers the ways in which the Twelve appear in contemporary culture. These books present a challenge for the most skilled interpreters, and their obscurity proves an even greater challenge for more casual readers. It is not surprising that expressions related to the Minor Prophets in contemporary culture tend toward notable phrases or images and the sparse characters, like Hosea and Jonah, which readers find there. In many cases these elements eclipse the larger concerns in the prophetic literature and become primary themes unto themselves, such as war and peace, civil rights, or the apocalypse. The ancient Israelite prophets were odd reshapers of tradition themselves, though, so the forms in which they have found their way into modern contexts may be oddly fitting.

Keywords: apocalypse, civil rights, Hosea, Jonah, peace, prophetic literature, war

(p. 385) AS the unfortunate moniker "Minor Prophets" suggests, this portion of the Hebrew Bible suffers from the perception that its contents are fragmented and insignificant. Such perceptions are not altogether unmerited, as belabored attempts to find unity or cohesion reveal. The way of reading this literature as a more connected Book of the Twelve has been present in Jewish tradition for a long time but has only recently entered the academic realms associated with the Christian tradition, and it is not yet common in church contexts or in the broader culture. The Minor Prophets present a challenge for the most skilled interpreters, and their obscurity proves an even greater challenge for more casual readers. It is not surprising, then, that the expressions related to the Minor Prophets in contemporary culture tend toward notable but isolated phrases or images and the sparse characters readers find there. In many cases these elements eclipse the larger concerns in the prophetic literature and become primary themes unto themselves.

Compelling Images

The image conjured by the poetic phrase “beating swords into ploughshares” appears frequently in efforts to advocate for peace in the modern world. In the tradition represented by the Masoretic text, the phrase enters the biblical tradition in Isa 2:4, which famously says:

> They shall beat their swords into plowshares
> And their swords into pruning hooks.

(p. 386) The other two appearances of the image are in Joel 3:10 and Mic 4:3, and the three form a fascinating case of intertextuality or “verbal parallels,” which demonstrates an important fluidity to the traditions on which the prophetic literature drew.[1] The versions of the biblical canon represented by the extant Greek manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible place the Twelve first in the sequence of prophetic literature and place Joel after Micah within the collection of the Twelve. This means that the order of the three sayings is reversed in the Hebrew and Greek traditions. The occurrence in Isaiah describes converting weapons into agricultural tools. The saying is identical in Mic 4:3, and the historical relationship between the two uses of the quotation is difficult to determine. The prophets named Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries in late eighth-century Jerusalem, but many interpreters argue that the writing of Isaiah 2 happened at a time much later than the eighth century when Isaiah was alive, so the text in Micah may be earlier. On the other hand, the final form of the book of Micah is also the product of an editorial process that extended long after the prophet’s life (O’Brien 2015, 40–43). Isaiah 2:4 and Mic 4:2 are both likely additions to existing prophetic collections, made during the Persian period. Direct literary dependence may not be necessary because the writers of the two books could have had independent knowledge of a memorable saying like this. In the wake of two centuries of disaster and destruction at the hands of militant enemies, both hoped for a return to productivity, symbolized by agricultural success.

What makes the situation even more interesting is the appearance of the saying in Joel 3:10 with the elements reversed, so that farming tools transform into weapons. A broader understanding of intertextuality would contend that proving literary dependence and the direction of the borrowing is not necessary for texts to interact with each other because they interact in the development of the Book of the Twelve, the formation of the biblical canon, and the reading process. Regardless of which way the transformation happens, weapons into tools or tools into weapons, the tradition asserts that the prosperity of the land, represented by agricultural production, cannot coexist with a state of violent conflict. Fertility of the land is a theme that appears throughout the Minor Prophets and may be most central to Joel, the book that uses the image in the farming-to-warfare direction of movement (Nogalski 2011a, 12–13). This tension has found its way into modern political parlance as “guns v. butter,” the need for modern nations to balance the competing demands of national defense and development.

The flexibility of the saying finds parallels in modern culture. While it is unlikely that anyone in the modern world would openly advocate converting farming implements into weapons, prominent uses of the phrase move in different directions. The twentieth-century Russian sculptor Evgeniy Vuchetich produced “Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares,” a work that is in the United Nations Art Collection. The riveting sculpture embodies the best hopes of a body of nations committed to reducing conflict in the world. *Swords into Plowshares* is also the title of the 2015 book by Ron Paul, long-time member of the United States House of Representatives from Texas and three-time presidential candidate. The primary idea of the book is that if a nation like the United States used all of the resources it has committed to fighting wars around the world for different purposes, a more healthy and vibrant society would be possible. These two uses of the (p. 387) phrase create an interesting juxtaposition, because Paul is an isolationist who opposes participation by the United States in organizations like the United Nations, and even NATO (Paul 2015, 73–78). This reveals two quite different approaches to the Isaiah/Micah version of the saying. Some see it as a motivating slogan, encouraging them to intervene in a proactive way to reduce the amount of conflict in the world, while others use it to advocate withdrawal from conflict in order to use those resources for more peaceful domestic purposes. The ready use of this phrase in a variety of ways indicates both a sense of familiarity among those in the intended audiences of these works and its ability to captivate those for whom it might not be familiar.

The reversed saying makes at least one prominent appearance in contemporary culture in the top-ten song from 1989 called “The End of the Innocence,” written and performed by Don Henley and Bruce Hornsby on Don Henley’s album by the same name. The song is a retrospective of the political scandals in the United States during the 1980s, particularly the Iran-Contra affair. The music video of the song shows images of Ronald Reagan posters during the line, “They’re beating plowshares into swords for this tired old man that we elected king,” followed by images of Oliver North’s testimony during the Iran-Contra Hearings (https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2pqk09).

The book of Amos may reach its high point in the fifth chapter. The “day of YHWH” tradition, which frames the stunning oracle of 5:18–24 at its beginning, will receive attention later in this essay. The portion of the oracle that has entered popular consciousness is the saying in the final verse: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” The line took on great prominence in American culture through the career of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who quoted it in a 1965 essay. King had been using the line from Amos in spoken form beginning at least a decade earlier with the address that helped launch the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, following the arrest of Rosa Parks and culminating in his famous speech during the march on Washington in 1963 (Branch 1988, 141; 843; 881). In 1976 “Let justice roll down like waters” became the title of the influential autobiography of another hero of the civil rights movement, John M. Perkins (2006). Because of these and other uses, perhaps no other phrase serves more to encapsulate the cause of human rights in the world. The full context of the saying is more complex. Amos 5 gives more attention to what must be abandoned in order to cause this flow of justice. It is a condemnation of the common religious practices of the culture, even

those commanded by the Torah (Andersen and Freedman 1989, 528–529). Some contemporary references like hymns by Colin Gibson (“Let Justice Roll Down,” 1994) and Jane Parker Huber (“Let Justice Flow Like Streams,” 1984) and contemporary religious songs like the 2013 “Rushing Waters” by Dustin Smith may not demonstrate significant recognition of the conflicts between traditional or institutional religious practices and this concern for justice.

Another common slogan that finds some connection in the Minor Prophets is “God Never Changes.” The Bible never makes this claim outright and, of course, the divine character in the Bible changes constantly, but the slogan is likely the product of combining a number of biblical texts, including Mal 3:6, which contains the seemingly straightforward statement in divine speech, “I, YHWH, do no change.” The fuller text does not (p. 388) even need a careful reading to determine that the statement is an affirmation of God’s continuing commitment to Israel and not a comprehensive, ontological description. Nevertheless, the idea of an immutable God has found popularity for a long time and is common in modern culture. Posters, bumper stickers, and t-shirts with versions of this saying abound, some of which contrast the constancy of God with all the elements of life that do change. It is not difficult to see why such a divine image would be appealing for a world in which the pace of change can be bewildering.

Perhaps the most pervasive influence of the Minor Prophets is the idea of a coming “Day of the LORD,” which they introduce. The full phrase appears seventeen times from Joel 1:15 through Mal 4:1, and dozens of less specific references to “the day” or “that day” appear throughout the collection. The prominence and placement of the phrase have led to proposals that it is the organizing principle of the Twelve, particularly in its Masoretic ordering, which places Joel second in the collection (Nogalski 2011, 11–12).

The pathway from the appearance of “the day of the LORD” in the Minor Prophets to the contemporary concept of a “judgment day” is long and tortuous. The idea of a fearful day of divine retribution or judgment in the near future combines with a powerful set of images in the book of Zechariah. A series of eight visions opens the book of Zechariah and the first and last of these feature horses, which the visions count and describe by color. In the final vision of 6:1–8, the horses are also pulling chariots, and there are explicitly four, seemingly paired with the four directions. The two visions are coupled by the purpose of the horses and chariots to “patrol the earth” (Conrad 1999, 122–123). The colored horses of Zechariah help form the background of the more famous “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” in Revelation 6:1–8 (Reddish 2001, 125). This title is not in the biblical book, and its origins are difficult to determine. The fourth in a series of fifteen woodcuttings by the German artist Albrecht Durer at the end of the fifteenth century depicts the four horsemen, and this artwork acquired the name at some point (Cunningham and Grell 2000, 5–7). A late nineteenth-century painting by Victor Vasnetsov used the title explicitly and named the horses Conquest (white), War (red), Famine (black), and Death (pale or pale green). It has proven to be a powerful and persistent image.

In the modern era, the image was captured by the famous preacher Billy Graham in his 1983 bestselling book, *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Graham wove together the common, sensational premillennialist view of the book of Revelation and his own view of history in an array of circular reasoning. *Approaching Hoofbeats* was a vaguer and more hopeful successor of the bestselling book of the 1970s called *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey (Lindsey 1970). Both books played with the threat of a Cold War conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, which resonated with the backstory of expanding and colliding empires in the prophetic literature. The emergence of an endangered modern nation of Israel in the middle of the twentieth century provided almost infinite possibilities for drawing facile analogies with the period in ancient Israel that produced the Minor Prophets.

The kinds of sensational predictions promoted by Lindsey and other contemporary apocalyptic preachers also make use of the sense of periodized history, excised from the vision in Daniel 9 and the "Apocalypse of Weeks" in 1 Enoch 72–108 (Newsom and Breed 2014, 275–280, 310–318). The origins of this idea probably lie in the claim by (p. 389) Jeremiah that YHWH would restore Israel from Babylonian captivity after seventy years (Jer 29:10), an idea that also appears in 2 Chron 36:21 and Zech 1:12, where it occurs within a vision during a conversation between Zechariah and an angel (Portier-Young 2011, 265–272). Lindsey used the combination of secret revelation, carefully structured history, and images of destruction to predict specific dates for the earth's final day, which he continued to revise in additional books when the dates passed without event. Predictions about the end of the world had come along occasionally for about fifteen centuries, but Lindsey and his publishers commercialized this interest like never before. *The Late Great Planet Earth* has sold somewhere around 35 million copies (Smith 2015, 201–248). This kind of thinking about an imminent "Day of the LORD" prophesied by biblical texts spawned many additional books and films, perhaps reaching a climax in the "Left Behind" series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, a collection of sixteen books published between 1995 and 2006 which were developed into movies, spin-off versions of the books for children, and even a set of video games. The cover of the fourteenth book, *Armageddon: The Cosmic Battle of the Ages*, shows the heads of four horses. The series seemed to capture the synthesis of "end-times" fervor from the Cold War era, and new concerns about the growth of technology and the end of a millennium, selling more than 50 million books (Frykholm 2007, 1–15).

Predictions of the coming day hit a fever pitch around the turn of the new millennium but now seem to be fading. The last serious gasp may have been the May 21, 2011, prediction by radio preacher Harold Camping, which was heavily promoted on radio and billboards. The failure of that date, along with the quickly revised October 21 prediction of the same year, seemed to arouse more ridicule than serious consideration. No image from the Minor Prophets has had more pervasive and lasting impact than this notion of a decisive divine moment on the horizon of history. In contemporary vernacular, the Day of YHWH has become "Judgment Day." The Minor Prophets may or may not contain apocalyptic litera-

ture, according to precise definitions of the genre, but they prove to be one of the most important sources of that tradition.

The dominant images of the Minor Prophets for modern culture provide competing centers of gravity. On the one hand, the calls for peace and justice focus on this world and the efforts of human beings who understand themselves to be divine agents or servants in the world. On the other hand is the alternating fear and hope that the world as humans now know it will soon come to an end with a dramatic divine intervention. The Minor Prophets help provide the fuel for both kinds of a vision for deliverance from the predicament in which humans find themselves.

Enigmatic Characters

No text in this collection ignites the imagination like the book of Jonah, particularly the second chapter of the book, when the prophet is inside a big fish.[2] It is the only extended narrative in the Minor Prophets. There are two important aspects to the big-fish portion of the story, which finds an important parallel in the fourth chapter when Jonah sits in (p. 390) the wilderness, aided by the shadow of a mysterious plant that shades him from the sun. First, the fish rescues Jonah from drowning. Second, it provides the place from which Jonah recites a prayer of contemplation and self-exploration. The fish represents a turning point, because the failure of Jonah in the first chapter transforms into success in the third, even if this is against his own wishes (Sasson 1995, 148–158).

Perhaps the most familiar use of this image is in the various adaptations of the story of Pinocchio. The scene inside the fish, which has swallowed Gepetto and later Pinocchio himself, is in the original work *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, written by Carlo Collodi in the late nineteenth century. A far larger audience is familiar with the 1940 Walt Disney adaptation of the story into an animated film. When Pinocchio is kidnapped and taken to Pleasure Island, Gepetto goes to sea to find him and gets swallowed by Monstro the whale. The twist in this expression of the story is that the whale is a trap rather than a means of rescue. Still, the episode is a turning point because Pinnochio must abandon his self-centered quest for human pleasure and seek to rescue his creator. The act of giving leads to his humanization.

The Jonah story took on added dimensions in modern culture with the role it played in Joseph Campbell’s 1949 book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 1949) Following the pattern of Carl Jung’s development of archetypes, Campbell promoted a universality of certain elements of myth. The totalizing tendencies of his approach have come under growing scrutiny, but it is still highly influential, thanks in large part to the promotion of Campbell’s *The Power of Myth* in a series of public television programs hosted by Bill Moyers. In Campbell’s work “the belly of the whale” (the title of a chapter in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*) became a Jungian archetype for an experience of self-discovery and rebirth. Campbell found this element in myths from around the world and made it part of his sequence of the “hero’s journey.” The “belly of the whale” is the final segment

of the first of three primary movements in the hero's journey (the departure), and it leads to the second movement (the initiation), which opens with a series of trials.

Campbell's influence may have reached its largest audience through its influence on George Lucas in the *Star Wars* films. The possibility of the Jonah image is awakened for the audience when Luke Skywalker, in *The Empire Strikes Back*, is saved from freezing on the ice planet Hoth by Han Solo, who cuts open a dying creature called a Tauntaun and puts Luke inside it to stay warm until a blizzard passes. This experience by itself does not match the Jonah story or Campbell's understanding because Luke is unconscious for all of it, but soon viewers are on another planet, Dagobah, where Luke is mentored by Yoda, the great Jedi Master. There may not always be strict correspondence between the life of Luke Skywalker and Campbell's hero, but the most profound moment comes when Luke must enter a cave, an element Campbell identified in some myths as part of the belly of the whale experience. Luke asks Yoda what is in the cave and receives the now famous answer, "Only what you take with you."

The Jonah story found a place in more explicit form in the quirky 1990s television show *Northern Exposure*. The main character, Joel Fleischman, had always been an out (p. 391) sider, a doctor from Brooklyn forced to practice in the tiny town of Cicely, Alaska, in order to pay off his medical school debt. In the fifth season episode called "Fish Story," Joel falls asleep while fishing and in a dream winds up inside a large fish like Jonah. In the dream, the fish he catches while sitting in a boat inside the fish is his rabbi, Schulman. The entanglement of images provides the occasion for Joel to talk to his rabbi in an effort to sort out the confusing turns his life has taken. His plan to serve out the necessary years in Cicely and then leave has become complicated because of the development of a romantic relationship.

The tendency of modern adaptations to put two characters inside the fish so that conversation can take place is striking. *Veggie Tales* began as half-hour television shows which heavily adapted biblical stories, with the characters replaced by talking vegetables, to produce morality plays for children. In 2002, the makers released *Jonah: A Whale of a Tale*, a full-length feature film in which the Jonah story played a prominent role. In the movie, a group of modern characters, caught up in a series of difficulties for which they are blaming one another, hear an adapted story of Jonah that urges them to be more forgiving toward each other. Even in this more explicit retelling, Jonah has a companion inside the fish.

Jonah imagery lies behind the strange plots of two recent films, *Buster's Mal Heart* (2017) written by Sarah Adina Smith, and *Belly of the Whale* (2018) written by Morgan Bushe and Greg Flanagan. Both films feature tragic, misfit characters whose lives have taken disastrous turns that alter their existence. In the former, the main character's name had been Jonah before the death of his wife and child lead to a new identity. In dream sequences he is lost at sea, and when awake, he becomes a strange, prophet-like figure who calls radio talk shows to expound conspiracy theories. In the latter film, two characters form a bond through their connected misfortunes and hatch an unlikely plan to help them

escape from their difficulties. Clearly, the Jonah character and his story have taken on a life of their own as a touchstone for stories of disaster, struggle, introspection, and a hope of escape, even when no big fish is present.

For similar reasons, Jonah and his story make appearances in contemporary, popular music. “Jonah” by Paul Simon explores the life and purpose of a musician. The story of a prophet swallowed by a whale is replaced by the image of a singer “swallowed by a song.” The artist character is consumed by the desire to make music and is captive to the struggle to make a living, hoping success and fame will come along soon enough to rescue him. The song ends by observing the quiet coming and going of many performers, never able to escape the trap created by their need to sing. “Up There Down There” by Patti Smith and Fred Sonic Smith explores the connections, or lack of connections, between heaven and earth. In the midst of a swirl of images, Jonah’s wailing from the water represents the human desire to overcome the boundaries, but heaven is “zipped up tight.” In both of these cases, the songwriters seem able to assume some level of familiarity with the Jonah story within the broader culture, yet the tale provides a malleable image that can be shaped or even subverted for the purpose of telling the song’s own story (on these songs and others using elements from prophetic literature, see McEntire and Emerson 2006, 84–90).

(p. 392) The most mysterious figure in the Minor Prophets is a woman named Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. Her name appears only a single time in Hos 1:3, but she fits into a long line of Old Testament women who have been the subject of both derision and fascination. The “evil temptress” archetype begins with readings of the story of Eve in Gen 3 and continues through Delilah in Judg 16 and Jezebel in 1 Kgs 21, the name of the latter becoming synonymous with the temptress. Gomer causes additional difficulties because of the specific divine command to Hosea to marry her, and the story presents a challenge for contemporary Christian understandings of the morality surrounding marriage. The paradox of the Gomer figure is that the traditions that find her morally problematic cannot avoid the attention they give her character. There have been at least a dozen adaptations of the story in contemporary literature, most fitting into the “Christian-romance” genre.

> *In the Shadow of Gomer*, Marilyn Hickey (1975)
> *Redeeming Love*, by Francine Rivers (1997)
> *The Preacher and the Prostitute*, by E. K. Bailey (2004)
> *Gomer’s Tale*, by C. J. Neubach (2009)
> *The Prophet’s Wife*, Milton Steinberg (2011)
> *Amazing Love*, by K. Dawn Byrd (2012)
> *Hosea and Gomer: A Love Story*, by Glen H. Von Wald (2012)
> *Love in a Broken Vessel*, by Mesu Andrews (2013)
> *The Story of Gomer: From the Book of Hosea*, by Geri Campbell (2014)
> *Invisible*, Jennifer Rothschild (2015)
> *Hosea: A Novel*, by Larry Christenson (2016)
> *Faithless Heart: A Love Story*, by Cliff Keller (2017)
> *Something Worth Fighting For*, by Heaven J. Fox (2017)

The most significant of these works is probably Francine Rivers's *Redeeming Love*, a book with a curious history of its own. Rivers wrote *Redeeming Love* as a straightforward historical romance novel in 1991, and it was published by Bantam Books. It is set in the middle of the nineteenth century in the California gold rush. In a reflection of her own religious conversion, Rivers revised and republished the book as an overtly Christian romance novel. In the story the "redeeming love" of the male character, Michael Hosea, rescues the woman, Angel, who had been abandoned and sold into prostitution (Neal 2006, 158–165). While the larger notion of a divine relationship with a nation is present in the novel, most other features of the biblical book of Hosea are gone, replaced by the plot of Angel/Gomer's redemption, an element not present in the biblical book. The idea that Hosea himself is Gomer's abuser (2:2–13 [Heb. 2:4–17]) just as YHWH's is Israel's abuser is replaced as other characters become Angel's abusers in the novel. The romance is developed from a single element lifted out of the book of Hosea, and any semblance of prophetic literature is erased.

Gomer has found her way into contemporary music as well, when the album called *Conspiracy No. 5* by the band called Third Day included "Gomer's Theme." The album was nominated for the Grammy Award in the Rock Gospel category, so it became well- (p. 393) known. The song is a useful modern expression of the problematic elements of the Gomer story in Hosea. Despite the title, the perspective of the lyrics comes entirely from Hosea and God, expressing a sense of betrayal. The song primarily chastises Gomer for her unfaithfulness and when it reaches the chorus threatens her with abandonment—"There will come a time when she will find that he's not there to give her love." The husband in the biblical story, Hosea, seems to some readers to be committed to the relationship at all costs, refusing to abandon Gomer. The song's threat of abandonment seems out of place, but at the same time it masks the violent abuse that goes with staying in the biblical story (on this violence and its relationship to "romance," see Weems 1995, 92–93).

Many contemporary scholars writing from a feminist perspective have described the use of sexual violence in Hos 1–3, which is perhaps the oldest of the prophetic texts to use the marriage metaphor to address the relationship between YHWH and Israel (Baumann 2003, 85–104). The marriage metaphor may have been a highly effective rhetorical device in the ancient world, but it presents enormous problems for modern readers because of the way it matches patterns of domestic abuse, even normalizing them as "God-like" behavior (Yee 2012, 299–308). The two cases from earlier both ignore the purpose of the book of Hosea as prophetic literature, grasping only the vehicle of the metaphor and not the tenor, but they move in opposite directions. The romance novel develops a redemption that never happens in Hosea, ignoring or displacing the abusive qualities of the relationship, while the song plays along with the abuse, still casting Gomer as the evil temptress who deserves her fate while the righteous man who loves her is wronged and justified in abandoning her. The tendency to lift pieces out of a book like Hosea may confirm the sheer difficulty of reading and understanding such a book on its own terms. Contemporary culture does not know what to make of it.

Characters are few and far between in the Minor Prophets. Other than Jonah, those who do appear, like Gomer, the priest of Bethel named Amaziah in Amos 7, or the persons merely named in the brief little book called Haggai, receive sparse treatment, leaving a lot of blank space for artistic development around them. Even though Jonah is the most developed character in the Minor Prophets, there is still ample ambiguity or blank space around him for artistic expression to move in many directions. Elements of his story become parts of other stories which may or may not look much like the book as a whole.

Conclusion

It is tempting to view the Minor Prophets as an anthology. The efforts to see unity and cohesion may at times seem forced or artificial. Ancient Israel produced these twelve prophetic figures and the small- to medium-sized literary works named for them. One result of bringing them together may have been the unlikely survival of some pieces of tradition too small to withstand the forgetfulness of time on their own. Two millennia (p. 394) later the phrases or images and characters that find their way out of that collection into a general cultural awareness may be like items pulled from a time capsule: objects of wonder and puzzlement. Perhaps they unfairly obscure others that were not preserved by the strangeness of pure luck or that simply are not as interesting. Jonah sitting in a booth in the wilderness stands no chance in the battle for attention against Jonah inside the fish, even if the meaning of the book is more closely tied to the divine–human conversation in the wilderness, watching over the great city. Likewise, pithy phrases stand up better in a broad cultural landscape than do ponderous ancient oracles. The ancient Israelite prophets were odd reshapers of tradition themselves, though, so the forms in which they have found their way into modern contexts may be oddly fitting.

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Notes:

([1.]) The term “intertextuality” has a problematic history of usage. It was coined by Julia Kristeva (1980). In this context the description of “verbal parallels” by Richard L. Schultz may be more precise and useful (1999, 18–61). For a more recent and rigorous theoretical discussion, see Joseph Ryan Kelly (2013, 805–826).

([2.]) On the “literary obsession” with the big fish, see Yvonne Sherwood (2001). Sherwood traces the long and vast history of reception of Jonah, including an extensive evaluation of what she calls “popular interpretation” (137–176).

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Hosea

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay begins by examining structure and cohesion in Hosea. It then reviews major themes and ideas in the book, including the marriage metaphor, the parent–child image, and the themes of the Exodus, wilderness, and "knowledge of God." The essay concludes with a look at three contested issues: redaction in Hosea, the book as a product of Persian Yehud, and the Baal cult as an object of the prophet's criticism. Challenging common views that the book addresses religious apostasy or syncretism, it suggests that some of Hosea's criticisms of the cult may be essentially denunciations of foreign alliances which were ratified by ritual measures.

Keywords: Hosea, redaction, marriage, Exodus, wilderness, knowledge of God, Yehud, Baal, Persian period

(p. 399) SCHOLARSHIP on Hosea is alive and well. Synchronic approaches now complement traditional diachronic analyses. Older interests in the thought and rhetoric of the eighth-century prophet continue, but explorations of the work of later editors have come to the fore. Commentators still attend to the historical context(s) of the material but also now examine with intense interest the literary artistry in the book. The richness and audacity of tropes in Hosea are being examined in greater detail and with more theoretical reflection on the function of metaphor; at the same time, the theological appropriateness of some metaphors is being re-evaluated. This essay examines structure and cohesion in Hosea, major themes and ideas in the book, and a small selection of the contested issues.

Structure and Cohesion

A superscription in 1:1 and an epilogue in 14:9 [Heb.14:10] frame the body of the book. The superscription labels the content of the book theologically as "the word of YHWH that came to Hosea son of Beeri" and dates the material to the reigns of Israelite and Judean kings in the eighth century BCE. The epilogue offers sage advice to "wise" readers: they should ponder and learn the lessons of the book, understanding especially that

"the ways of YHWH are right, and righteous people walk in them, but transgressors stumble over them."

Most commentators see a three-fold division in the body of the book: 1:2–3:5; 4:1–11:11; and 12:2–14:9 [Heb. 12:3–14:10]. The first section begins and ends with prose reports about the troubled marriage of Hosea (1:2–9 and 3:1–5). These bracket a divine speech in chapter 2 about YHWH's troubled marriage to a wife/mother, who ostensibly represents the nation Israel. In poetry, YHWH first accuses the woman of infidelity and threatens her with harsh discipline and divorce (2:2–13 [Heb. 2:4–15]), then pivots abruptly and resolves on a reconciliation (2:14–23 [Heb. 2:16–25]). The framing of the speech by the (p. 400) two prose reports suggests a close analogy between the human household of the prophet and YHWH's household with Israel.

The two prose reports differ from one another. The first is a narrator's third-person account of Hosea's marriage to a "harlotrous" woman named Gomer, the births of their three children, and the symbolic naming of each: Jezreel, Not-Pitied, and Not-My-People. The second in chapter 3 is a first-person account, ostensibly from the prophet. It tells that, at the command of YHWH, Hosea went "again" and loved an "adulteress," purchased her, and ordered her to abstain from all sexual relations "for many days." The identity of the woman is obscure, and so, not surprisingly, scholars have long debated whether she is Gomer or a second woman.

The second main section, 4:4–11:11, consists mostly of accusations and threats against the northern kingdom Israel, along with isolated references to Judah (4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13; 6:4, 11; 8:14; 10:11). The style throughout the material is poetic. The section opens with a command to hear the word of Yahweh and a proclamation of the deity's "contention with the inhabitants/rulers of the land." With few of the normal form-critical markers for the beginning and ending of prophetic speeches, the sayings give the impression of a long, angry diatribe against the nation, punctuated by moments of divine consternation (e.g., 6:4). The section concludes with YHWH's mournful self-reflection and decision to forgo further judgment and instead to restore the people in the land (11:8–11; cf. 6:4–5). The oracular formula at the end of 11:11 (*neum-YHWH*, "says YHWH") separates chapters 4–11 from what follows.

The third main section, 11:12–14:9 [Heb.12:1–14:10]), is another concatenation of poetic sayings, some presented as divine speech and others couched in the prophet's own voice. The material refers to Judah in 11:12b and 12:2a [Heb. 12:1b and 3a]), but otherwise the focus is on Ephraim/Israel. The section begins with a programmatic charge: Israel has surrounded YHWH with "deception" and "treachery." More specific accusations and several threats then follow, culminating in an announcement of impending disaster: the nation will die a second death (13:14; cf. 13:1) and the capital city of Samaria will suffer military atrocities (13:16 [Heb. 14:1]). The second and third main sections of the book show the same progression of accusations and threats leading to a final promise of salvation. The pattern partially resembles the three-part organization of whole prophetic books like

Isaiah: prophecies against Zion, Judah, and Israel; then oracles against the foreign nations; and finally promises of restoration for Zion and Israel.

Dividing the material in chapters 4–11 and 12–14 into smaller literary units is difficult. The repetition of vocabulary often lends cohesion to individual units. In 4:1–16, for example, key terms reoccur: "contention/contend" (*rib/ryb*) in vv. 1 and 4; "knowledge" (*da'ath*) in vv. 1 and 6; "whore/whoredom" (*znh/zenunim/zenuth*) in vv. 11–14. In some cases, repeated terms function as *inclusios* that help to mark the beginning and end of a unit, for example, "altars" (*mizbehoth*) in 10:1 and 8, "bear guilt" (*'shm*) in 13:1 and 13:16 [Heb. 14:1], and perhaps "requite" (*hiphil* of *shwb*) in 12:2 and 14 [Heb. 12:3 and 15]).

If one accepts the superscription's claim that the prophecies in the book date to the eighth-century BCE (see "Contested Issues" later), it is reasonable to entertain the possibility of a chronological ordering, at least in chapters 4–11 and 12–14. In chapters 4–11, reflection begins on the last years of Jeroboam II, ca. 752–750, or the reign of Menahem, (p. 401) ca. 747–738 (4:1–5:7; perhaps also 5:8–6:11a). The focus shifts forward to the rise of Hoshea and the early years of his rule, ca. 730–726 (6:11b–7:16), and then progresses to the Assyrian arrest of Hoshea and the subsequent siege of Samaria, ca. 725–722 (8:1–11:11). The material in chapters 12–14 relates to the fall of Samaria in 722 and the renewal of the city's rebellion against Assyria in 721–720 (Hayes and Kuan 1991).

While the positive message in 14:1–8 [Heb. 14:2–9] ends the third main section, it also functions as a conclusion for the entire body of the book. The passage picks up terms, themes, and images from the earlier chapters, either restating, reinterpreting, or reversing them. Israel has "stumbled" (*kshl*) in its iniquity (14:1 [Heb. 14:2]; cf. 4:5 and 5:5). The people are exhorted to "turn/return" (*shub*) to YHWH (14:1–2 [Heb. 2–3]; cf. 2:9, 3:5, 5:4, 6:1, 7:10, 7:16, 11:7, and 12:6 [Heb. 14:7]). They are to offer genuine "words" (*debarim*) of repentance in place of animal sacrifices, talk (*dbr*) against YHWH, and the "words" (*debarim*) of treaties with foreign nations (14:2 [Heb. 14:3]; cf. 5:6, 6:6, and 10:4). The people will pledge to accept the "good" (*tob*, 14:2 [Heb. 14:3]; cf. 3:5 and 8:3). They will promise to end the contradictory practice of looking to Assyria for help and mounting rebellions for national independence (14:3 [Heb. 14:4]; cf. 5:13, 7:11, 8:9, 10:13b, and 12:1b [Heb. 12:2b]). They will renounce the production of cult icons, which were part and parcel of political rebellions (14:3 and 8 [Heb. 14:4 and 9]; cf. 4:17, 8:4b–5, 10:5–6, and 13:2). YHWH pledges to "heal" (*rp'*) the people (14:4a [Heb. 14:5a]; cf. 6:1, 7:1, and 11:3). He will "love" (*'hb*) them freely (14:4a [Heb. 14:5a]; cf. 3:1, 9:15, and 11:4). YHWH will be like "dew" (*tal*) to Israel so that the people will "sprout up" (*prh*) and bear "fruit" (*peri*, 14:5 and 8 [Heb. 14:6 and 9]; cf. 6:4, 9:16, 10:1, 4b, and 13). God will "watch" (*shwr*) over them (14:8 [Heb. 14:9]; cf. 13:7). They will reside in the "shade" (*tsel*) of YHWH the tree (14:7 [Heb. 14:8]; cf. 4:13b).

Some recent analyses of structure in Hosea have proposed intricate schemes of organization. According to Gale Yee, each of the three main sections of the book highlights a particular metaphor for covenantal relationship between YHWH and Israel: husband/wife in

1–3; parent/child in 4–11; and a combination of husband/wife and rebellious son in 12–14. In addition, each main section exhibits a progression from barrenness to fertility; see 2:5, 14, and 20–25; 4:3; 5:15–6:3; 9:12; 11:10–11; and 14:5–8 [Heb. 14:6–9] (Yee 1996).

Marvin Sweeney combines considerations of genre with a synchronic literary analysis to challenge the usual three-fold division of the book. In his view, careful attention to speakers and addressees indicates that the body of the book consists of two main sections: the third-person narrative in 1:2–11 [Heb. 1:2–2:2], addressed by an anonymous narrator to an anonymous audience; and the prophecies of Hosea in 2:1–14:8 [Heb. 2:3–14:9], addressed to Israel and spoken in the prophet's own voice or in the voice of God. The prophecies, in turn, divide into four units that proceed in logical order: 2:1–3:5 [Heb. 2:3–3:5] presents an initial appeal for Israel's return to YHWH; 4:1–19 announces YHWH's contention against the nation; 5:1–13:16 [Heb. 5:1-14:1] elaborates the details of the deity's contention; and 14:1–8 [Heb.14:2–9] exhorts the people to reject Assyria and return to YHWH. The longest of these units, 5:1–14:1 [Heb. 5:1–14:2], subdivides into sections that treat different specific issues between YHWH and Israel. In 5:1–7, the concern is with the nation's "harlotry" and its bearing of "alien children." In 5:8–7:16, the focus shifts to Israel's alliances with Assyria and Egypt. Chapter 8 emphasizes the responsibility (p. 402) of kings and princes for Israel's violation of the covenant with YHWH. In 9:1–14:1 [Heb.14:2], agricultural metaphors and images of animal fertility describe Israel's rejection of God in adopting foreign cult practices (Sweeney 2000).

James Trotter offers a reader-oriented interpretation of Hosea in its final form, which he attributes to literati in the early Persian province of Yehud, ca. 539–516 BCE. In chapters 1–3, Yehudite readers/listeners perceive the movement from accusation/judgment to promise/reconciliation three times (1:2–2:1 [Heb. 1:2-2:3], 2:2-23 [Heb. 2:4–25], and 3:1–5). In the second section, 4:1–6:6, the pattern set up in 1–3 is broken when the people offer repentance and YHWH rejects it (6:1–6). In the third section, 6:7–11:1, readers observe the piling up of accusations and threats, only to see the deity reverse himself and promise salvation despite the absence of repentance. In the final section, 11:12 -14:8 [Heb. 12:1-14:9], accusations and threats resume. The ending in 14:1-8 [Heb. 14:2–9] envisions a reconciliation between YHWH and the people that rests entirely on the deity's pledge to "heal their apostasy" and "love them *freely*." The readers' experience of the divine–human relationship as they move through the sequential sections of the book thus leads to a theological lesson, namely, the absolute sovereignty of God vis-à-vis God's people (Trotter 2001).

While one can appreciate the effort of these analyses to discern detailed structure in the book of Hosea, one can also recognize the shortcomings of the proposals. For example, contra Yee, Hos. 11:10–11 conveys the idea of the people's resettlement and security in the land rather than their fertility or plentitude. Contra Sweeney, although the first-person style of 3:1–5 presents it as a saying of Hosea, its narrative form and focus on the prophet's marriage connect it to chapters 1 and 2. Furthermore, the contention of Yahweh in 4:1–16 looks to be a specific condemnation of the cultic misbehavior of the people and its priests, so that 5:1–14:2 is hardly an elaboration of the details of the complaint

presented in chapter 4. As for Trotter's analysis, passages like 6:1–6 and 11:1–11, which disrupt the theological pattern of chapters 1–3, may be signs of disunity rather than moments of purposeful disorientation for the readers. All three analyses as well as others underscore a cautionary lesson for all exegetes: a mind bent on detailed structure will find detailed structure.

Major Themes and Ideas

Several Images and Topics Characterize the Book of Hosea

Imagery

A key metaphor within the book is that of marriage, in which YHWH takes the role of husband and Israel the role of wife. Especially prominent in chapters 1–3, the metaphor reflects ancient Israelite and ancient Near Eastern laws regulating marriage and divorce. A man acquires a wife by paying a bridal price to the woman's father and giving bridal (p. 403) gifts to the woman. He also pledges bridal provisions, usually consisting of food, clothing, and personal supplies. The wife, in turn, owes the man sexual fidelity so as to guarantee his paternity of any offspring.

Hosea 1–2 depicts a marriage gone bad. In chapter 1, the promiscuity of the prophet's wife is compared to the promiscuity of the land, which "goes whoring away from YHWH" (v. 2). As Hosea's family grows with the births of three children, their symbolic names signal the gradual deterioration of YHWH's household with Israel (vv. 4, 6, and 9). Chapter 2 elaborates a similar picture in greater detail. Israel the wife/mother commits "adultery" by pursuing, even hiring, "lovers" for the gifts of food, drink, clothing, and oil (vv. 2b, 5b, 12b [Heb. vv. 4b, 7b, 14a;]), even though these are bridal gifts or provisions from YHWH (vv. 8 [Heb. 10]). The deity entertains various punitive or correctional actions —divorcing Israel for just cause (v. 2 [Heb. 2: 4]), stripping Israel naked in public or killing her with thirst (vv. 3 and 10 [Heb. 5 and 12]), secluding Israel from lovers (vv. 6–7 [Heb. 8–9]), and reclaiming or destroying the bridal provisions/gifts (vv. 9 and 12 [Heb. 11 and 14]). YHWH ultimately resolves to remarry Israel (vv. 14–23 [Heb. 16–25]), courting her again so that she "responds" as she once did in her youth (vv. 14–15 [Heb. 16–17]). YHWH will betroth her with new bridal gifts of righteousness, justice, loyalty, compassion, and faithfulness (vv. 19–20 [Heb. 2:1, 3, and 25]).

The marriage metaphor is not explicit in chapters 4–14 but probably is implied in passages that accuse the nation of "whoring" (*znh*) and "adultery" (*n'p*) and associating with "lovers" (*'ahabim*). In 4:12–14, 15, 18 and perhaps 5:3–7, the charges of whoring and adultery seem to concern the Israelite cult, while in 6:10 "whoredom" appears to characterize civil strife. The charge of "adultery" in 7:4 relates to some incident of political intrigue within the royal court, and in 8:9–10 the nation's hiring of "lovers" alludes to political alliances with other states, probably against Assyria. In 9:1, Israel's "whoring" in-

volves cultic behavior and perhaps political scheming. All of these accusations elaborate the nation's infidelity vis-à-vis its divine husband.

A second way of depicting the divine–human relationship is that of YHWH as parent and Israel as child. In chapters 1 and 2, this image mixes with the husband–wife metaphor, as Israel is represented both by the wife/mother and by her children. The reversal of the children's names, Not-Pitied to Pitied and Not-My-People to My-People (or Sons-of-the-Living-God), amounts to a renaming that signals the readoption of Israel by the divine parent (1:10b, 2:1 and 23 [Heb. 2:1, 3, and 25]).

Elsewhere in the book, the prophet casts Israel specifically in the role of YHWH's rebellious son by utilizing the language regarding the wicked and rebellious son in Deut. 21:18–20. Hosea 4:16 and 18 describe Israel as "stubborn" (*srr*) and a "drunkard" (*sb'*, cf. Deut. 21:18, 20). In Hos 7:12 and 15, the deity speaks of "disciplining" (*ysr*, cf. Deut 21:18) the people and seizing their arms. In Hos 9:15, YHWH threatens the people with expulsion from his house and declares that he will no longer love them because their officials are "rebellious" (*sorerim*, cf. Deut. 21:18, 20).

The most extended picture of Israel as the rebellious son comes in chapter 11. In the exodus from Egypt, the deity had adopted Israel as his son (v. 1) and then raised the people as a loving parent, but they refused to acknowledge his care and they abandoned him (p. 404) by revering the baals and idols (vv. 2–4). In response to this history of rebellion, the deity first threatens the nation with destruction (v. 6) but then experiences a change of heart. As divine parent, YHWH cannot bear to abandon his obstinate son Israel to the punishment of death (vv. 8–9).

The theme of the exodus also is prominent in the book of Hosea. In 12:9a [Heb.12:10a] and 13:4a, the deity declares to Israel: "I am YHWH your God since the land of Egypt." Since YHWH delivered the people in Egypt (12:13 [Heb. 12:14]), they owe YHWH exclusive allegiance and should regard him as their only "savior" (13:4b, 14:7 [Heb. 14:8]). Due to the nation's history of infidelity in the land, especially during the days of Hosea, YHWH cancels the special relationship he established with Israel in the period of the exodus: "You are not my people, and I am not your I-Am" (1:9b; cf. Exod 3:13–14). As punishment, Israel will return to Egypt, thus reversing the exodus (8:13b).

The wilderness tradition relates closely to the exodus theme and it too figures prominently in the book. According to 2:14-15 [Heb. 2:16–17], the period of the wilderness was the time of Israel's youth, when YHWH first married Israel. The second marriage of YHWH and Israel will also take place in the wilderness: there, the divine husband again will court the bride Israel, and she will answer as on "the day she came up from the land of Egypt." A similarly positive use of the wilderness tradition occurs in 13:5, where YHWH says to Israel, "I knew (*yd'*) you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; according to their pasturage, they were satisfied." In both 2:14-15 [Heb. 2:16–17] and 13:5, the wilderness period is presented as the age of good relations between YHWH and Israel. A more

mixed understanding comes in 9:10, where the picture of the deity's choice of Israel turns dark, referring to the apostasy at Baal-pe'or in the land of Moab (Num 25:1–18).

Another important theme in Hosea is "the knowledge of God" (*da'ath 'elohim*). The expression occurs only in 4:1 and 6:6, but sayings about Israel "knowing" (*yd'*) YHWH are frequent in the book. In 4:1, "the knowledge of God" is correlated with "faithfulness" (*emet*) and "loyalty" (*hesed*), and thus it appears to convey the notion of allegiance to God. In 6:6, "the knowledge of God" again is parallel to "loyalty," and both stand in opposition to animal sacrifices. In the broader context of 6:1–6, "knowledge of God" likely signifies a genuine and steady allegiance to the deity, in contrast to occasional or superficial cultic efforts to prompt and experience the salvific advent of YHWH.

Hosea's Concerns

Hosea's invective against Israel (and Judah) is often hard to understand with any precision, especially given the metaphorical and general nature of its language. Several concrete political and/or cultic complaints, however, are evident. The Jehu dynasty committed bloody acts in Jezreel (1:4; see 2 Kgs. 9–10). Judean officials encroached on Israel's southern border, apparently participating in an invasion of the Benjamite area (5:8–10). Israel continually enters into alliances, sometimes with Assyria, sometimes with Syro-Palestinian states ("lovers") against Assyria (7:12; 8:9–10; 9:4; and 12:1b [Heb. 12:2b]), and sometimes with Egypt for aid against, or refuge from, Assyria. Israelites turn to other gods (3:1) and venerate "the baals," presumably foreign deities (2:13 [Heb. 2:15]).The nation is guilty of producing cult images (4:17), especially calf icons (8:4b–6b and (p. 405) 13:2). Priests mislead the people into wrongdoing at rural shrines and also at urban sanctuaries like Gilgal, Bethel, or Samaria, and perhaps Beersheba (4:4–15). They practice divination, and their sacrifices are reasons for shame (4:12 and 19). Through prophets and perhaps priests, they make accusations against the deity (9:7–9; cf. 4:4–5 and 12:14 [Heb. 12:15]).

The ensuing judgment against Israel (and Judah) likewise is political and/or cultic. The Jehu dynasty will suffer military defeat, and its extended territorial domain will come to an end (1:4–5). An "enemy" (probably Assyria) will "pursue" Israel (8:3), and the people will "writhe" under the burden of foreign tribute (8:10b). Deportations to Assyria and the flight of refugees to Egypt will depopulate the land (8:13b; 9:3, 6). The people will thus lose their institutions of government, and many will live as exiles abroad (3:4; 9:3, 15a, 17b; cf. 11:11a). The various festivals of the nation, including New Moon and Sukkoth, as well as Sabbath observance, will cease (2:11 [Heb. 2:13]; 9:5). The "high place" sanctuaries will be destroyed, and their abandoned altars will be covered by thorns and thistles (10:8b). The "calf of Samaria" will be shattered (8:6b; cf. 10:5–6). In short, the nation's institutions of cult will disappear for a long time (3:4).

Beyond this judgment, the book of Hosea envisions salvation: YHWH and Israel will reconcile. The hope for reconciliation is implicit in 2:6-7 [Heb. 2:8–9], 5:15, 6:11b–7:1, 7:10b and 13b, 10:12, and 12:7 and explicit in chapters 1–3, 11, and 14. Judeans and Israelites will unite, appoint a single leader, and "go up from the land" (1:11 [Heb. 2:2]). The divine

husband YHWH will remarry the wife/mother Israel (2:2-23 [Heb. 2:4–25]). The Israelites will return to YHWH and to “David their king” (3:5). In chapter 11, the heart of YHWH recoils and his compassion grows warm; the divine parent forswears further punishment of Israel the rebellious son and promises to resettle the people in their homes. The picture in chapter 14 is even more glorious. Israel will return to YHWH, ask for forgiveness, pledge to accept “goodness,” and renounce its dependence on Assyria, military power, and idols (vv.1-3 [Heb. 2–4]). YHWH, in turn, promises to heal Israel’s apostasy, love Israel freely, and bless the people with plentitude and divine care.

Contested Issues

Redaction

Redaction in Hosea has received much attention since the 1980s. In contrast to older analyses of editing in the book, newer studies are marked by (1) greater interest in the work of editing as a theological effort to reinterpret the prophetic message for later generations of readers, and (b) stronger emphasis on the way editors created literary and theological unity in the corpus at each successive stage of redaction. Redaction-critical analyses of Hosea differ greatly, however, in their understandings of the process of redaction and the number and dating of the editorial stages.

(p. 406) Grace Emmerson focuses on the Judean redaction of Hosea (Emmerson 1984). She finds evidence for it in some references to Judah (4:15, 5:5, 6:4, 10:11, and 12:2 [Heb. 12:3]), some salvation sayings (2:16–23 [Heb.2:18–25], 5:15, 11:10, and 14:4-8 [Heb. 14:5–9]), and statements of opposition to northern sanctuaries like Gilgal and Bethel (4:15, 5:8, and 12:11 [Heb. 12:12]). Through editing, the eighth-century prophet’s criticism of northern cultic practices was intensified to denounce the very existence of northern sanctuaries and extended to cover cultic practices in Judah. His vision of Israel’s salvation was adjusted to present salvation as the deity’s response to repentance. Emmerson associates this redaction of Hosea with the Deuteronomic movement in the seventh century BCE.

Gail Yee reconstructs four stages in the book’s development (Yee 1987). First were the oral sayings of the eighth-century prophet. Next, a collector (probably a disciple of Hosea) recorded, arranged, and supplemented the prophetic sayings in chapters 1 and 2. The corpus then was redacted during the reign of Josiah by a Judean editor steeped in Deuteronomic thought. Finally, the material underwent a Deuteronomistic redaction during the exilic period as a reaction to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. In contrast to Emmerson’s study, Yee’s analysis assigns only a small portion of Hosea (about fifty verses or verse fragments scattered throughout the book) to the eighth-century prophet. The bulk of the material is attributed to the exilic editor.

Four other redaction-critical studies yield an even wider range of results. Marti Nissinen analyzes the process of editing in Hos 4 and 11 as a microcosm of the redaction history of the entire book (Nissinen 1991). He concludes that, while the book does contain some pre-exilic poetic sayings, it arose as a coherent and comprehensive whole only through

the work of exilic or postexilic redactors. In contrast, Thomas Naumann argues for a written collection of carefully planned Hoseanic compositions already in the eighth century, produced by Hosea's close disciples, perhaps with the aid of the prophet himself (Nauman 1991). A limited number of secondary additions took place in Judah after 722 BCE and in the exilic or postexilic periods. Roman Vielhauer (2007) presents a more complex picture of the book's growth. In his view, the oral preaching of the prophet shines through only in a few passages (5:8–11, 6:7–9, 7:5–6, and 7:8b–9). A written collection of sayings (5:1–2 + 6:7–7:12) first arose after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722, and this small literary kernel underwent several expansions, each advancing a single concern or idea. According to Suzanne Rudnig-Zelt, nothing in Hosea derives from the eighth-century prophet (Rudnig-Zelt 2006). The book is entirely a Judean product, which began in the late eighth century with the writing down of some figurative sayings (e.g., 7:8b, 11a, 9:11a, and 10:7) and then grew gradually through the addition of multiple editorial layers, each addressing a new generation of Judean readers.

In weighing these redactional proposals, several observations arise. (a) While multiple redactions is one way of accounting for the multiplicity of ideas in Hosea, it is possible that the eighth-century prophet addressed multiple concerns and adjusted his views over a career of two decades. (b) Methodological clarity does not necessarily ensure the certainty of results. Emmerson and Yee, for example, share many of the same criteria for identifying secondary additions yet draw very different conclusions about the book's (p. 407) editorial growth. (c) Linguistic or literary criteria for redaction are more reliable than observations regarding historical or theological incongruity, since the latter depend on how one reconstructs the details of Hosea's time and assesses the complexity and evolution of his thought.

Persian-Period Concerns

The trend of scholarship to date more and more of Hosea to postmonarchical times has culminated in studies that view the book as a product of learned authors in Persian Yehud (Trotter 2001; Ben Zvi 2005; Bos 2013). Ehud Ben Zvi is the primary champion of this position. His commentary on Hosea combines consideration of genre with a synchronic, reader-oriented approach to the book. The main details of his argument follow:

> **(a)** The genre of Hosea is a "prophetic book" which intends to convey authoritative lessons about YHWH and Israel in the past and future. While early materials and redactional layers might lie behind the present book, they are difficult to determine and are irrelevant to the meaning of the book for its intended readers.
> **(b)** The prophet Hosea is not the actual author of the book but its *implied author*. Reading the book *as though* it came from the ancient prophet grants the book its authority.
> **(c)** The actual authors of Hosea are the literati in early Persian Yehud, who constructed the book as a series of "didactic prophetic readings." By providing numerous cross-references between the readings, the literati encouraged readers to ponder each text in light of others and thereby discern fundamental theological lessons about the nation's past and its future.

(d) The “metanarrative” that unites the various readings stresses that YHWH chose Israel in the distant past but punished the nation for its sins by bring the monarchy and other institutions to an end. At some future time, YHWH will restore his relationship with Israel in its ideal form. For readers in Persian Yehud, the divine choice of Israel and the nation’s sin and punishment lie in the past. They look forward to restoration in the future.

Despite the erudition of Ben Zvi’s commentary, his interpretation faces several challenges. Much of Hosea appears to reflect the circumstances and events of the eighth century (Na’aman 2015): diplomatic contacts and treaties with Assyria (5:13–14, 10:4, 12:2); an appeal to Egypt for aid or refuge (7:16, 12:2); Judean invasion of Israel (5:8–10); the “calf of Samaria” taken to Assyria and replaced by new calf icons (8:4–6, 10:5–6, 13:2); Beth-arbel destroyed by Shalman (Shalmaneser V?); and Bethel treated similarly (10:14–15). These and other details fit the final years of the Northern Kingdom, making it doubtful that the book was created by literati in Persian Yehud. Further evidence for an eighth-century setting may be found in the book’s cryptic allusions to events such as (p. 408) bloodshed in the city of Gilead, priests committing murder on the road to Shechem (6:7–9), and officials conspiring against a king of Israel in a nightly meeting (7:3–7). These allusions would have been more understandable to eighth-century Israelites than Persian-period readers.

Also questionable is Ben Zvi’s view of verbal and thematic links between texts as part of a cross-referencing system created by late literati. Such links instead may reflect a collection of sayings from an eighth-century prophet/orator who employed the same vocabulary and returned to the same tropes over time. Ben Zvi’s picture of Yehudite readers flipping back and forth between texts with similar words, metaphors, and themes seems more modern than reflective of the reading strategies of ancient readers.

Criticism of the Cult

In the twentieth century, most scholars interpreted Hosea’s preaching against the background of a Canaanite fertility cult of Baal involving sexual rituals. Hosea supposedly polemicized against this cult but also borrowed aspects and adapted them to Yahwism. This interpretation (or some version of it) continues to have defenders (Day 2010) but also a growing number of challengers (Keefe 2001; Yee 2003; Kelle 2005).

The reasons for doubting the idea of a widespread Baal cult in eighth-century Israel are several. (a) The picture of a sexualized Baal cult in pre-exilic Palestine is based on the late, polemical, and thus unreliable testimony of classical writers, primarily Herodotus. (b) Amos, Isaiah, and Micah are eighth-century contemporaries of Hosea, and they say nothing about Baal worship in Israel or Judah. (c) Amos is a prophet from Judah who preaches in the Northern Kingdom, and he depicts the northern cult as thoroughly Yahwistic. His only complaint is that the northern cult is excessive and ultimately ineffective in a time of economic polarization and exploitation. (d) The full array of onomastic evidence undercuts the idea of widespread Baal worship in eighth-century Israel (Kelle 2005, 144–148). (e) In its presentation of the sequential reigns of Israelite monarchs, 1

and 2 Kgs confines the Baal cult to the ninth-century dynasty of the Omrides. Ahab is said to have introduced the cult (1 Kgs 16:31–32), and Jehu is said to have ended it (2 Kgs 10:18–28). The account of the reigns of subsequent kings (2 Kgs 11–17) gives no hint of an ongoing cult of Baal. Only 2 Kgs 17:16 claims that the veneration of Baal continued to the end of the Northern Kingdom. The accusation is a sweeping generalization by an exilic author, and it has little value as a witness to Israelite religion in the eighth century.

One more argument can be added. The original story of Jehu in 2 Kgs 9–10 may date to the last years of Jeroboam II, when prophetic and popular opposition to the Jehu dynasty was mounting. The story defends the legitimacy of the dynasty by glorifying its ninth-century founder as a warrior with divine and prophetic sanction. The story asserts that he killed King Jehoram and the rest of the evil Omrides and then destroyed the Baal temple in Samaria; Jehu "wiped out Baal from Israel" (10:28). It is unlikely that the eighth-century story of Jehu would assert Jehu's elimination of the Baal cult if the cult were alive and well in eighth-century Israel.

(p. 409) If Israel's participation in a Canaanite cult of Baal is not the target of Hosea's preaching, then the book's cultic criticism could be understood in various ways:

(a) *As an inner-Israelite dispute over right and wrong worship*. "Baal" represents multiple deities who contradict genuine Yahwism but influence it as well. In a process of conceptual abstraction, "the baals" become code for sinful worship and the singular "Baal" a synonym for a sinful relationship with God (Jeremias 1986).
(b) *As a criticism of popular Yahwism*. Long before the eighth century, veneration of YHWH alongside other deities, cultic rites on the high places, divining rods, calf icons, and pillars were acceptable parts of Yahwism. The prophet champions a monolatrous, if not monotheistic, theology and a purification of the YHWH cult (Yee 1996).
(c) *As a critique of state religion in eighth-century Israel*. The official cult legitimated the royal bureaucracy and ideology, and thereby it sanctioned, by implication, the unjust economic policies of the national government. As state bureaucrats, priests colluded with the government in efforts to exploit agricultural production for the benefit of the crown and aristocracy and to the great disadvantage of Israelite peasants. In response to the big agribusiness encouraged by the king and supported by the priesthood, Hosea may proclaim the exclusive worship of YHWH, who long ago liberated Israel from oppression in Egypt (Keefe 2001; Yee 2003).
(d) *As an attack on political allies or their deities*. The prophet condemns Israelite treaties with foreign states (especially Syria/Damascus) in rebellion against Assyria. In 9:10, 11:2, and 13:1, the prophet refers to Israel's veneration of the god Baal as a sin of the distant past, which symbolizes the political maneuvering that Hosea observes in his own day and condemns as "harlotry" with "lovers" (Kelle 2005).

The first three of these proposals have shortcomings. Since Amos (who preached in many of the same places in roughly the same period as Hosea) is utterly silent about the worship of Baal and other deities, polytheistic worship is not likely the target of Hosea's criticism. In addition, given that Hosea lists divination, pillars, and animal sacrifices as legiti-

mate institutions that Israel will lose when disciplined (3:4; cf. Isa 3:1–5), his opposition of those practices seems unlikely. The connection between the cult and state economic policy is plausible, but it remains to be substantiated. Amos and Isaiah offer glimpses of social and economic injustice in eighth-century Israel and Judah, but the details are vague, and the rest of the Hebrew Bible says little about the economy of monarchical Israel. Archaeology provides plenty of artifactual data, but they are disparate and usually ambiguous in meaning. Recent understandings of the Israelite economy and state policy rely heavily on theoretical models, and so one may wonder how reliable they are as guides for understanding the cultic criticism in Hosea.

Drawing connections between cultic criticism and political commentary in Hosea appears a more promising interpretative path. Since political treaties were ratified in the names of nations' deities and concluded with cultic measures like animal sacrifice, some of Hosea's cultic criticisms may be essentially a denunciation of foreign alliances that the (p. 410) prophet regards as bad (Kelle 2005). In addition, Israelites probably understood cultic statues as necessary for the continuation of YHWH's protective presence. In 725, the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V responded to an Israelite revolt by arresting Hoshea (2 Kgs. 17:1–6) and probably confiscating the "calf of Samaria" (10:3–6). Israelites manufactured new calf icons when the revolt resumed in 725–720 (13:2). Hosea may decry calf icons because he opposes the rebellion for which they were made (see 8:4–6 and 8–10).

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Joel

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay offers an introduction to the major literary and theological issues of the book of Joel. It shows how an agrarian disaster (locusts and drought) is transformed into a prophecy concerning the nations. The book's engagement with with earlier texts (especially those relating to the "Day of Yahweh") attests to its late origin, and its ending reflects late theological thinking about the relationship between Israel and the nations, portraying Yahweh as the ruler of the whole world. In its final form, the book is shaped by a vague specificity that allows its use and application over a broad period of time.

Keywords: Joel, agrarian disaster, locusts, prophecy, ecology, drought

JOEL 1:1 assigns the following three (in Hebrew, four) chapters to a certain Joel, son of Pethuel. "Unlike most other superscriptions in the books of the prophets, no information is given beyond this" (Barton 2001, 39). The name Joel is known from other passages in the Hebrew Bible, but little can be gleaned from the other mentions.[1] The name of his father, Pethuel, is only attested here, and the Septuagint equates him with Bethuel, son of Nahor and father of Laban known from Genesis.[2] Whether the name Pethuel is symbolic (Crenshaw 1995, 80) cannot be determined. Later tradition adds little to the sparse biographical information. The *Lives of the Prophets*, traditionally attributed to Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis (315–403 CE), offers a creative exegesis of 1 Chr 5:1–8. The brief life of Joel simply states: "Joel was from the land of Reuben, in the field of Beth-Meon; he died in peace and was buried there" (Nickelsburg 1984, 57). The *Ascension of Isaiah* (2:9) sees Joel, together with Habakkuk and Micah, as a contemporary of Isaiah and he, for some reason, believes in the ascent into heaven.

In the canonical order of the Masoretic text, Joel interrupts the chronological order of Hosea–Amos–Micah–Zephaniah and lacks a detailed historical setting. Joel 1:1 does, however, correspond to Hos 1:1; Mic 1:1; and Zeph 1:1 by conforming to the so-called *dabar*-pattern ("the word of the LORD was to"; Wöhrle 2006, 33–39). This lack of historical detail may allow for the view that Joel was added at a later stage.[3] Already a cursory reading of Joel demonstrates that many of the issues recurring in the Book of the Twelve

are mentioned so that “Joel forms a necessary (but not the only) interpretive key for unifying major literary threads in the Twelve” (Nogalski 2017, 138). Even if one remains skeptical of such a reading of the book within a larger literary context, it is difficult to overlook the fact that Joel shows a high degree of awareness of and engagement with earlier literary traditions from the Hebrew Bible (Bergler 1988; Coggins 2000, 21–24).[4] The book has rightly been described as scholarly prophecy (Jeremias 2002).

> A striking feature of that short book is the frequency of allusions to other parts of the Hebrew Bible, sometimes in what appear to be direct quotations, more often by way of indirect associations. (Coggins 1996, 75)

(p. 412) This engagement with earlier texts, especially those relating to the “Day of Yahweh,” attests to a late origin of the book as part of the prophetic canon (Barton 2001, 16–18; Jeremias 2007, 3–5).

Though there are influential voices defending the unity of Joel (e.g., Rudolph 1971; Wolff 1977, 7; Assis 2013), even a cursory reading of the final form of the book shows that the book is the result of a longer literary development.[5] Next to the superscription, two parallel structured inclusions (1:27 and 2:17) point to the addition of material. “Then afterward I will” at the beginning of 2:28 [Heb. 3:1]) seems to refer back to “as before” in 2:23, also indicating that the chapter was added later and may serve as a transition from chapters 1 and 2 to chapter 3 [Heb. chap. 4]). Since the book only generally speaks of “foreign people,” the concretization of the nations in 3:4–8 [Heb. 4:4–8]) can quickly be identified as a later expansion (Jeremias 2007, 49; Hagedorn 2011, 274–278). Lastly, the catchwords between 3:14–21 [Heb. 4:14–21]) and Amos 1:1–2 point to a deliberate link of both prophetic books at a later stage (Nogalski 1993a, 24–27; Wöhrle 2006). In the following we will trace the literary development of the book, highlight the changing theological concepts, and pay attention to the larger context of Joel within the Book of the Twelve.

Joel 1: The Beginning of Joel’s Prophecy—Remembering a Drought and Locusts

The beginning of Joel’s prophecy was provoked “by a devastating locust attack and catastrophic drought” (Wolff 1977, 13). This disaster is an event of the past but is being transmitted to future generations, as 1:2–3 indicates:

> Listen to this, O elders,
> Give ear, all inhabitants of the land.
> Has the like of this happened in your days,
> or in the days of your fathers?
> Tell your children about it,
> and let your children tell theirs,
> and their children the next generation.[6]

As in the thanksgiving psalms of the individual (e.g., Pss. 9:2, 15; 26:7; 40:6; 118:17; and Müller 2008, 31), the supplicant asks others to tell of Yahweh's deeds of salvation. This process is necessary, since the deeds have to be transmitted for future generations to witness divine devotion anew. "Thus, by the use of 'telling' the future generations, any reader of the book of Joel knows in advance that she or he is informed of an unexpected (p. 413) act of divine salvation in order to learn for her or his own generation, how to be saved when a similar need like the drought in the days of Joel is experienced" (Jeremias 2012, 83). The parallels to Exod 10:12–15 are intended (Bergler 1988, 247–294; Jeremias 2007, 12–13). Both verses can be seen as an introduction to the first two chapters of the book (Rudolph 1971, 41; Crenshaw 1995, 87; Seitz 2016, 116), and there is no need to regard the call to attention as a reference to texts outside the book.[7]

The agrarian disaster is described as a series of locust infestations (Nogalski 1993b, 218), which resulted in the utter destruction of crops.[8] The destruction of the land is described in detail in 1:4–18, stressing that various groups such as farmers, vintners, and priests are affected. The lack of any members of the political class is surprising, and one gets the impression that the leadership of society as envisaged by Joel is in the hands of priests and elders. These two groups clearly "had the most connection to traditional knowledge and thus could both affirm the incomparability of the current situation and inaugurate a new tradition of passing down this scenario" (Barker 2014, 78).

This description of an agrarian catastrophe is interrupted in 1:6–7 by verses that interpret the destruction of the locust plague of 1:4 in light of a military campaign.[9] In contrast to the universal perspective so prominent in Joel 2, this first expansion remains solely agrarian. The description of the destruction by the locusts culminates in the exclamation "alas for the day!" by priests and elders in 1:15a. The day that is lamented here is not yet identified with the "day of Yahweh," though the verse will serve as the anchor for the reinterpretation of the agrarian catastrophe in the light of this theological concept (Hagedorn 2011, 252). Here the "day" is not yet a cosmic event but is described in detail in 1:16–20, emphasizing that even the animals suffer. Lament changes to divine response in 2:1, provoked by the cry to Yahweh in 1:19 ("to You, O LORD, I call") which evokes God's compassion ("the LORD had compassion on his people"). What follows in 2:19, 21–26 is a lengthy description of the restitution of the agrarian world that speaks of the "replacement" of the years lost by the locusts in 2:25. The end of the plague is reason for joy and leads to the praise of God by all who have suffered. It is not said who is responsible for the end of the locust plague, but in the context it is clear that it is Yahweh who banishes the insects.[10] The statement "my people shall be shamed no more" in 2:26 concludes this first prophetic edition of the book of Joel.[11]

At this first stage of the literary development of the book, there are few connections to the overall context of the Book of the Twelve. Instead, the text reflects the agrarian setting of the postexilic period and the ongoing worries about crops and the basis of life. The *Sitz-im-Leben* may have been the cult, and the genre could be described as a liturgy of thanksgiving, though it is difficult to argue for a concrete use (Barton 2001, 21–22).[12]

Already here we encounter a vague specificity of Joel's prophecy that allows later hands to reinterpret the prophetic message and reshape it in the light of universal validity.

(p. 414) Joel 2:1–27 [Hebrew chap. 2]: Reinterpreting the Locust Plague in Light of an Invasion by Foreign People

Joel 2 introduces aspects distinct from those in chapter 1 and "it is out of the question that the same calamity should underlie both chapters" (Wolff 1977, 41–42). In contrast to the agrarian catastrophe of the proceeding chapter, it is clear from the beginning that we are now dealing with a military campaign:

> Blow a horn in Zion,[13]
> sound an alarm on My holy mount!
> Let all the dwellers on earth tremble,
> for the day of Yahweh has come!

By using language known from Zephaniah (see Zeph 1), Joel 2:1–14 describes a powerful military assault of an anonymous aggressor and interprets it in light of the day of Yahweh. After 2:2bβ stresses that the approaching foreign nation is unique in history, the verses depict the impact of the invasion on the land, the people, and finally on the whole cosmos. The use of earlier traditions explicates that the fate of Jerusalem is always connected to the fate of the whole creation and cosmos.

That a swarm of locusts can be used as a metaphor to describe an approaching army is well attested in the eastern Mediterranean. Two examples may suffice here. In Aristophanes' play *Acharnians*, Theorus says:

> And Sitacles poured a libation and swore he would help us by sending an army so large that the Athenians would say: "What giant swarm of locusts heads our way!"[14]

Jeremiah 51:27 likens the cavalry that moves against Babylon to a swarm of locusts, in a similar way as Babylon is described in Jer 48:23 when it attacks Egypt, showing how interchangeable the use of the metaphor can be:

> Raise a signal throughout the world,
> blow a trumpet among the nations;
> mobilize the nations against it.
> Summon the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz.
> Appoint a commander to attack it,
> bring up horses like a swarm of locusts.[15] (Jer 51:27)

In Joel, "the imagery of the locusts intertwines with the imagery of an invading army … so that in the end the two motifs run together" (Nogalski 1993b, 7). At the same time concepts known from Isa 13 are integrated and reapplied (Jeremias 2000).

(p. 415) In a similar manner to the locust plague of the basic stratum of Joel, the approaching army, too, is seen as a unique event. Both events are linked by a transfer of the day(s) of the locusts to a day of Yahweh. In other words, it is the view of the foreign nation that gives the passages speaking of the day of Yahweh its meaning.[16] Here, the book of Joel operates with known concepts from other prophetic books such as Amos and Zephaniah and utilizes them for its own accord. The question in Joel 2:11 about who could endure such a day of distress is answered by a change in the portrait of God who—in the middle of chaos and despair—shows compassion for his people (Jeremias 2007, 28):

> Yet even now—says the LORD—
> Turn back to Me with all your hearts,
> and with fasting, weeping, and lamenting.
> Rend your hearts
> rather than your garments,
> and turn back to the LORD your God.
> For He is gracious and compassionate,
> slow to anger, abounding in kindness,
> and renouncing punishment.
> Who knows but He may turn and relent,
> and leave a blessing behind
> for meal offering and drink offering
> to the LORD your God? (2:12–14)

This compassion is underscored by the grace formula known from Exod 34:6. “Yhwh’s gracious and merciful character, described in this formula offers the reason to hope that Yhwh will react to the repentance of the people and turn to them again” (Wöhrle 2012, 10).[17] How one is to envision repentance in Joel is difficult to determine because the book never speaks of the guilt of Israel. The inclusio provided by 2:27 shows that 1–2 must have been transmitted as a collection of prophecy, probably already assigned to Joel, son of Pethuel.

Joel 2:28–32 [Hebrew chap. 3]: A Universal Community of Yahweh

In Joel 2:28–32 [Heb. chap. 3] we witness a significant departure from the portrayal thus far, and the chapter has rightly been described as one of the first steps toward the end of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible (Jeremias 2007, 41).[18] “This kind of democratization of the gift of the spirit is one of the most remarkable ideas of the book of Joel, whatever exactly endowment with the spirit is taken to mean” (Barton 2001, 33). The unit begins with a bold statement:

(p. 416)

> After that
> I will pour out My spirit on all flesh;
> your sons and daughters shall prophesy ;

> your old men shall dream dreams;
> and your young men shall see visions.
> I will even pour out my spirit
> upon male and female slaves in those days.
> (2:28–29 [Heb. 3:1–2])

The pouring out of God's spirit on all flesh is difficult to read. The phrase "all flesh" (*kol basar*) is used in the Hebrew Bible to describe either the whole body of a human person (Lev 13:3; Num 8:7) or an animal (Lev 4:11) or all inhabitants of the earth (Gen 6:17; 9:11, 15; Num 18:15; Ps 136:25; Dan 4:9) and humanity in general (Is 40:5–6; 49:26; Jer 25:31; 45:5; Ezek 21:4,10; Zech 2:17; Ps 65:3; 145:21; Job 12:10; 34:15). This universal use of the phrase makes it difficult to relate the statement of 2:28–29 [Heb. 3:1–2] only to Israel. It seems that the verses move beyond the concept described in Ezek 39:28–29 where the spirit is only poured upon the house of Israel:

> They shall know that I the LORD am their God when, having exiled them among the nations, I gather them back into their land and leave none of the behind. I will never again hide My face from them, for I will pour out My spirit upon the House of Israel—declares the LORD God.

In a similar manner Zech 12:10 limits the gift of the spirit to Israel and qualifies the spirit in more detail:

> But I will fill the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with a spirit of pity and compassion; and they shall lament to Me about those who are slain, wailing over them as over a favourite son and showing bitter grief as over a first born.

Such a limitation of the spirit seems to be abandoned in Joel 2:28–32 [Heb. chap. 3], where the prerequisite for prophetic speech is transferred to everybody.[19] We may have here a subtle critique of the official cult: receiving the spirit seems to suffice to be a follower of Yahweh (Hagedorn 2011, 268). Furthermore, the day of Yahweh is delayed further (2:31 [Heb. 3:4]) and has now become an event at the end of days. In contrast to 2:3, Zion is not seen as a place of refuge and salvation will happen "to everyone who invokes the name of the LORD" (2:31 [Heb. 3:5]).

> Invoking YHWH's name implied both privilege and responsibility. To come under divine protection in a covenantal relationship meant surrendering to certain obligations of fealty, the worshipper agreeing to keep YHWH's statutes and to render exclusive loyalty to him. (Crenshaw 1995, 169)

As such, Joel 2:28–32 [Heb. chap. 3] expands the community of believers to all who profess to Yahweh and follow in the path laid out by Deutero-Isaiah.[20] In other words, (p. 417) the community is no longer homogenous and defined by a common lineage. Instead, this new community defines itself by worship, and 2:32 [Heb. 3:5] understands this new people in ways quite similar to Zech 13:9b:

> They will invoke Me by name,

and will respond to them.
I will declare “You are My people,”
and they will declare,
“The LORD is our God!”

Joel 3 [Heb. 4]: A Universal Judgment

When read in the light of the precursory chapter, Joel 3:1–21 [Heb. 4:1–21] explicates what will happen to those who will not evoke the name of Yahweh.

> For lo! in those days
> and in that time,
> when I restore the fortunes
> of Judah and Jerusalem,
> I will gather all the nations
> and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.
> There I will contend with them
> over my very own people, Israel,
> which they scattered among the nations.
> For they divided My land among themselves
> and cast lots over My people;
> and they bartered a boy for a whore,
> and sold a girl for wine, which they drank.
> (3:1–3 [Heb. 4:1–3])

As Barker notes, “YHWH’s actions are again the focus of 3:1–21 [Heb. 4:1–21], and they set up the contrast between YHWH acting salvifically toward the Judahite community and YHWH bringing judgment against foreign nations” (Barker 2014, 219).

Within the internal chronology of the book, the events of Joel 3 [Heb. 4] are set *after* the locust plague and the great and dreadful day of Yahweh. A concrete anchor for such a judgment of the foreign nations is not given. “Unlike the oracles in Joel 1:2–2:27, they do not seem to have been called forth by any particular crisis … but are all purpose oracles, relevant (or irrelevant) at any given moment” (Barton 2001, 92).

The chapter revolves around the guilt of the nations and explicitly exculpates Israel; the sin *par excellence* committed by the nations is the fall of Judah, and the exile is seen as the sin *par excellenc*e committed by the nations. The possibility that Yahweh may not turn to Israel again—voiced in 2:14 by using phrases from Am 5:15 and Zeph 2:3—is (p. 418) discarded.[21] As a result, the exile is no longer seen as a punishment of Israel but simply represents a transgression of the people that needs to be punished. In contrast to texts like Isa 66:18 and Zeph 3:8, however, the judgment of the people is only announced and will be carried out in the future. Here, we find a mixture of the language describing the agrarian disaster and its reinterpretation as a military invasion. Joel 3 (Heb. 4) can only

be understood when the reader is familiar with the previous texts (Wöhrle 2006, 420–421).

It is a feature of late biblical prophecy that ethnicity is negotiated by religious affiliation. Since Joel 3 [Heb. 4] envisages a judgment of those people who are deemed guilty of acts against Israel, a peaceful vision of a return to Yahweh such as that found in Mic 4 and Isa 2 is not possible. In fact, Joel 3:10 [Heb. 4:10] explicitly reverses Micah's pacifism and makes it abundantly clear that the fate of the nations brings salvation to Israel. The anonymity of the nations allows for a universal perspective, allowing Joel's prophecy to remain relevant through the ages. This characteristic of Joel is likely why it was placed before Amos in the canon: the oracles against the nations in Amos 1–2 can be understood as a reification of the statement in Joel 3:2 [Heb. 4:2] that Yahweh will gather all the nations and, in turn, Joel "actualizes and eschatologizes Amos' oracles against the nations" (Nogalski 1993b, 48).

The Theology of the Book of Joel in the Context of the Book of the Twelve

The book of Joel joins other books of Minor Prophets in addressing the relationship between Israel and the foreign nations. In the prophetic books, words against foreign nations appear to be an integral part of the literary genre, and "it seems to have come to be normal, even obligatory, for prophetic books to include oracles against a variety of foreign nations" (Barton 1986, 203). It seems that ancient Israel defined itself against the background of its neighbors. These oracles generally originate on the basis of actual historical knowledge and will later be transformed; these passages from the prophetic books offer a "literary anchor" for the reconstruction of the biblical book as well as for the shape of Judean identity. The oracles can be seen as part of a discourse employing stereotypes that shed light on the question how the "other" is constructed in the Hebrew Bible.

Joel differs from other books in that it is grounded in an agricultural disaster that was later transformed to reflect a conflict with foreign nations. As a result, the book offers little historical data, but its vagueness makes it the ideal interpretive key for the following ten books.[22] Such observation, however, should not ignore the fact that Joel can be understood as a book in its own accord, and it is indeed possible to read it without any larger literary context or interpretative frame.

Joel 2:28-3:21 [Heb. chaps. 3–4] reflects late theological thinking about the relationship between Israel and the nations. It portrays Yahweh as the ruler of the whole world, a (p. 419) concept absent from chapters 1 and 2, where Yahweh is still painted as the storm-god of pre-exilic times who protects his city and land. In 2:28-3:21 [Heb. chaps. 3–4], the nations have lost their individuality ("all the nations," 3:2, 11, 12 [Heb. 4:2, 11, 12]) and are the general opponents of the people of God. Israel will, of course, benefit from

Yahweh's judgment, but this is not the concept of "election," given that such terminology is rarely used in the Book of the Twelve.

Joel 2:28–32 [Heb. 3:1–5] joins other texts from the Book of the Twelve that include the nations in the salvation brought by Yahweh.[23] In this way, 2:28–32 [Heb. chap. 3] seems to be the end of a theological development when a separation of world into people and nations is dissolved in favor of a humanity under the spirit of God. Such vision cannot be seen as an alternative to the judgment, since Joel never states that the nations turn to Yahweh on their own accord; rather, it is Yahweh's action that prompts their inclusion. Unlike in Zech 8:20–23, Israel has no part in or positive effect on the nations. Despite such innovation, Temple and Zion remain the religious and cultural center, even for the other nations. "Although his story does not promise automatic salvation, it assures access to salvation for those assembled at the temple" (Troxel 2015, 99). Joel differs from concepts found in Jonah where it seems possible to bring offerings to Yahweh outside the land (Jonah 1:6, cf. Zeph 2:11; Mal 1:11).

These theological debates point to a very late origin of Joel 2:28–3:21 [Heb. chaps. 3–4]. The universal judgment of the nations probably belongs to discourse of the late Persian period (Steck 1996), while the vision of Joel 2:28–32 [Heb. chap. 3] may best be understood during the relative peace of Ptolemaic times. In its canonical shape and place, however, the book is not focused on a specific time of crisis. Instead, it serves as a reassurance that God is in control of all things (locusts, a foreign attack, and wanton foreign nations) and that he will "carry out God's good purpose in God's own good time" (Barton 2001, 36). This is a message that allows us to read Joel in the context of the book that carries his name as well as in the overarching larger composition of the Book of the Twelve.

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Notes:

([1.]) See 1 Sam 8:2; Ezra 10:43; Neh 11:9; 1 Chr 4:35; 5:4, 8, 12; 6:18, 21; 7:3; 11:38; 15:7, 11, 17; 23:8; 26:22; 27:20; 2 Chr 29:12.

([2.]) Gen 22:22–23; 24:15, 24, 47, 50; 25:20; 28:2, 5.

([3.]) In the Septuagint, Joel follows Hosea–Amos–Micah and precedes Obadiah, while 4Q78 (4QXII^{c}) and 4Q82 (4QXII^{g}) follow the Masoretic order. In 8Ḥev1 (8ḤevXII gr) Micah follows Joel, while Mur88 (MurXII) attests the order Joel–Amos. Thus far we do not know of a pesher to Joel from Qumran, and the unedited fragment MS Schøyen 4612/1 that contains several fragments from 3:1–4 (Heb. 4:1–4) overlaps with Mur88. See the overview of the attestation of Joel in the texts from the Dead Sea in Lange (2009).

([4.]) Ehud Ben Zvi has drawn again and again attention to the fact that all prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible are self-contained literary units "that was [sic] produced within ancient Israel, and characterized by a clear beginning and conclusion, by a substantial level oftextual coherence and of textually inscribed distinctiveness vis-à-vis other books, and

that, accordingly, leads its intended and primary readers (and re-readers) to approach it in a manner that takes into account this distinctiveness" (Ben Zvi 2003, 279–280).

(5.) Vernes (1872) was the first to argue that 1:1–2:27 [Heb. chaps. 1-2] and 2:28–23:21 [Heb. chaps. 3-4] were written by different authors.

(6.) Unless otherwise indicated all quotations from the Hebrew Bible follow the second edition of the *Hebrew–English Tanakh* of the Jewish Publication Society.

(7.) Scoralick proposes that the opening of Joel has to be seen as a commentary on Hosea, especially on Hos 14:1–8 [Heb. 14:2–9] (Scoralick 2002, 161–162). In the light of Hos 14:9 [Heb. 14:10], this is difficult to maintain as the separation of Israel into "righteous" and "'sinners" is not found in Joel, and the other occurrences of "hear this" in the Hebrew Bible indicate that the phrase always refers to what follows (Isa 47:8; 48:1, 16, 10; Hos 5:1; Am 8:4; Ps 49:2; Job 34:16).

(8.) Any speculations about the identity of the locusts are fairly pointless as the four different terms are simply used to describe the totality of the devastation; see Simkins (1991); Andiñach (1992); Lössl (2004); and Radner (2004).

(9.) The same hand can be detected in 1:17aβ and 2:20; see Hagedorn (2011, 248–252).

(10.) See Hurowitz (1993) for ancient Near Eastern parallels.

(11.) In detail the beginnings of the book of Joel can be described as follows: 1:2–5, 8, 10–15a, 16–17aαb–20; 2:18–19a, 21–23* [without "as before"], 24–25a, 26.

(12.) Here it is indeed possible to describe Joel as a cultic prophet as already observed by Kapelrud: "Joel is no more an epigone than the rest of the prophets, but it would appear that he stood closer to the temple and the cult than many of them" (Kapelrud 1948, 180).

(13.) While Joel 1 uses Zion simply as a synonym for Jerusalem, the reinterpretation in chapter 2 explicitly classifies Zion as the dwelling of Yahweh and as a "holy mountain."

(14.) Greek text and English translation are according to Henderson (1998, 76–77).

(15.) English translation according to McKane (1996, 1316). For examples from Assyria, see Luckenbill (1924, 43–44).

(16.) On the role of the day of Yahweh in the Book of the Twelve see the ground-breaking article by Rendtorff (2002) and the detailed studies of Beck (2005) and Schwesig (2006), as well as Nogalski (2003).

(17.) Joel 2:15–17 can be characterized as a gloss to the previous verses that want to explain the meal and drink offering. This is done by using vocabulary from chapters 1 and 2 (Hagedorn 2011, 265).

([18.]) Apart from the late gloss in 2:32bβ [Heb. 3:5bβ] (see later), the chapter is a unit (Wöhrle 2006, 423–424). The often noted change in subject between 2:28–30 [Heb. 3:1–3] and 2:31–32 [Heb. 3:4–5] cannot be an indication of literary growth as the verses quote other passages from Joel as well as from Obadiah. Also without 2:31–32 [Heb. 3:4–5], chapter 2:28–32 [Heb. chap. 3] would appear misplaced in the overall cotext of the book.

([19.]) The later gloss in 2:32bβ [Heb. 3:5bβ] (Rudolph 1971, 70–71) corrects this universal view and limits the spirit to “survivors in Jerusalem whom Yahweh will call.” It is this correction that influences the reception history of 2:28–32 [Heb. chap. 3], as Acts 10:44–36 demonstrates.

([20.]) For “invoke” as a term of confession by non-Israelites, see Isa 41:25; 44:5; Zech 19:9; Ps 105:1.

([21.]) Later additions are 3:4–8 [Heb. 4:4–8], verses that detail the judgment of the people by introducing concrete nations; and 3:15–16a, 18–21 [Heb. 4:15–16a, 18–21], which connect the book of Joel to the following book of Amos.

([22.]) When Joel is read within the context of the Book of the Twelve, the relationship between Hosea and Joel is a problem. The catchwords (Nogalski 1993b, 13–14) between the end of Hosea and the beginning of Joel are fairly general and many of the topics treated in Hosea do not recur in Joel and vice versa. “In short, while it is certainly possible that a deliberate linkage may exist between the two books, it can scarcely be described as self-evident” (Coggins 1996, 77). Maybe the integration of Joel into the emerging canon of the Minor Prophets led to a separation of Hosea from the original collection (Wöhrle 2006, 388–391).

([23.]) See Mic 4:1–4; 5:6–7; Zeph 3:9–10; Zech 2:15–16; 8:20–23; 14:16–19; and also Isa 66:22–24.

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Amos

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay engages various interpretations of Amos. Amos has conventionally been regarded as a paradigmatic prophet in scholarly and popular imagination, but recent scholarship has raised new questions and proposed alternative approaches to the book. Literary analysis highlights its sophistication as a work of prophetic poetry and its destabilizing effects on readers. Historical-critical inquiries are marked by increasing skepticism about reconstructions of Amos's biography and background, and redactional studies now emphasize the book's development as a literary composition for Judahite audiences. Ideological critiques challenge the straightforward acceptance of the book's claims about justice and its cultic polemics, even as that rhetoric continues to appeal to readers in diverse global contexts. Ecological approaches illuminate new ways that the book resonates with contemporary concerns about environmental exploitation and the value of the nonhuman world.

Keywords: Amos, prophetic poetry, justice, ideological criticism, ecological approaches, ecology

(p. 425) BECAUSE the prophet Amos has conventionally been identified as the first "writing prophet," the book of Amos is often the first text covered in classes or books about the biblical prophets. The ongoing resonance of the book's calls for justice and its suggestive biographical hints about its namesake have further made Amos a paradigmatic prophet in popular and scholarly imagination. Although still commonly encountered, this conventional portrait of Amos (both the prophet and the book) has been challenged in much recent biblical scholarship. At the same time, the book's haunting language and distinctive themes continue to encourage (re)reading. This chapter selectively explores some recent developments in research on the book, identifying both enduring problems that are finding fresh solutions and new questions that are energizing Amos studies. It begins with a survey of the book's structure and distinctive literary style and religious claims, then considers ongoing debate about the book's origins and development, and finally discusses the challenge and promise of Amos's rhetoric about justice, worship, and ecology.

Structure, Style, and Themes

The book opens with a superscription (1:1) identifying the titular prophet as a sheep-breeder from Tekoa, near Jerusalem; it also designates the kingdom of Israel as the subject of his prophecies, which are located temporally during the reigns of Kings Uzziah of Judah (ca. 783–742 BCE) and Jeroboam II of Israel (ca. 787–747) and also two years before an earthquake. Amos 1:2 previews the prophecies by describing YHWH's "roar," which originates in Jerusalem and causes devastation as far away as Mt. Carmel, in the northern reaches of Israel. Following these introductory verses, the book can be divided into four sections.[1] The first (1:3–2:16) contains poetic speeches threatening disaster against seven different nations. Six of them, including the kingdom of Judah, were neighbors of Israel and variously its allies, enemies, and vassals at different times. The seventh and (p. 426) longest prophecy is directed against Israel itself. The second section (3:1–6:14) consists of poetic speeches directed against Israel, which criticize the kingdom's social and religious offenses and threaten harsh judgment, focusing on the capital city of Samaria and the cultic center of Bethel. The third section (7:1–8:3) contains four prose, first-person vision narratives, in which YHWH shows Amos some object portending doom for Israel. After the first two, the prophet begs for mercy and the deity relents, but the third and fourth visions are unalterable. Between the third and fourth visions is a third-person narrative in which Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, rebuts Amos's prophecies and orders him to return to Judah. The final section (8:4–9:15) is another series of poetic speeches. Amos 8:4–14 sounds similar themes to chapters 3–6, while 9:1–8a unfolds a horrific scene of destruction. The seeming finality of this scene, however, is undercut by the book's final units, which limit the destruction to "sinners" (vv. 8b–10) and depict a paradisiacal restoration of fortunes for Judah and Israel (vv. 11–15).

With the exception of 7:1–8:3, the book of Amos consists largely of poetry. As is typical for the Hebrew Bible, this poetry is organized into couplets or triplets, which frequently display matching syntactic structures and parallel semantic content. In some cases, these units are loosely arranged by theme, and the ordering does not seem especially meaningful. In contrast to much biblical poetry, however, Amos contains several medium-length or long poems with more perceptible structures. The prophecies against foreign nations in chapters 1–2 are organized by interlocking patterns of repeated formulas, such as "for three sins of *x* / and for four, I won't turn it back" and "I'll send fire upon."[2] A repeated refrain appears in 4:6–12 ("but you didn't return to me / oracle of YHWH"). It is widely accepted that 5:1–17 follows a concentric or chiastic pattern, in which a series of thematic elements runs through the middle of the poem and is then repeated in reverse order through the end (e.g., lamentation in vv. 1–2 and 16–17; the injunction "seek" in vv. 4–6 and 14–15). Similar arrangements have been proposed for 6:1–14 and even for all of 4:1–6:7 or 3:1–6:14, although there is more debate in these cases (see Eidevall 2017, 10–11; Radine 2010, 30–36). Repeated words or themes appear at the beginning and end of the book and establish a sense of wholeness and completion, including earthquake imagery (1:1–2; 9:1, 5) and a group of place names (Carmel, 1:2, 9:3; Aram and Kir, 1:5, 9:7; Philistines, 1:8; 9:7; Edom, 1:11, 9:12).

Compared to other prophetic literature, Amos contains few similes or metaphors (Eidevall 2017, 9; Marlow 2009, 129). Those that do occur are generally limited in scope. For instance, YHWH is implicitly depicted as a lion in 1:2 and 3:8; the people of Samaria are compared to sheep in a marked simile in 3:12; and the women of Samaria are addressed as cows in 4:1. At the same time, Amos's figurative language is often developed intricately and employed creatively. In 3:12, the simile does not simply liken the inhabitants of Samaria to sheep; it graphically compares their damaged luxury goods to the dismembered body parts of a devoured lamb, and it features additional details about a lion and a shepherd. Other conventional metaphors in Amos include Israel as a virgin daughter (5:1), judgment as a sieve (9:9), and Israel as a plant (9:15). The book also contains novel figurative language. Twice, a simile compares a threatened earthquake to the rising and subsiding floodwaters of the Nile (8:8; 9:5). The source and target of this comparison are unusually similar, both being natural phenomena. Another innovative met (p. 427) aphor is the "famine of hearing YHWH's words" in 8:11–13. The absence of divine communication through prophets is described elsewhere in the Bible (1 Sam 3:1; Ps 74:9), but never with this metaphor.

Compensating somewhat for this limited use of figurative language, Amos employs strikingly concrete imagery. Lavish homes are a frequent target of divine judgment, and their materiality is emphasized by the descriptive terms "ivory" (3:15) and "ashlar" (5:11; NRSV, "hewn stone"), or by the threat that they will be smashed to "smithereens" and "fragments" in 6:11 (an uncommon case of end-rhyme in Hebrew: *resisim/beqi'im*). The circumlocution "clean teeth" denotes famine in 4:6. In 5:10 and 15, the abstract concept "justice" is localized by references to the city "gate," where legal disputes could be settled. Perhaps no image is more vivid than the final portrait of a world transformed, in which fields and vineyards become so fertile that planters and harvesters lap each other and wine replaces water in mountain streams (9:13). Throughout the book, brief narrative-like vignettes add color to the surrounding poetry. In 5:19, an unlucky man escapes both a lion and a bear, only to be bitten by a snake the moment he arrives home and relaxes. In an especially haunting episode in 6:9–10, someone searches for his relatives' bodies following a devastating catastrophe. A survivor implores him to remain quiet, in order not to accidentally attract the deity's deathly attention. In addition to its visual details, Amos's poetry also has a notable auditory quality. It opens with the sound of YHWH'S "roar" in 1:2 (see also 3:4, 8). Sounds of battle (1:14; 3:6), revelry (6:5), and especially mourning (5:16–17; 8:3, 10) punctuate the poetry. The noise becomes so deafening that different speakers in the book attempt to silence it (5:13, 23; 6:10; 8:3).

Rhetorical questions occur frequently in Amos, including a striking run of nine in 3:3–8 (see also 2:11; 5:25; 6:2, 12; 8:8; 9:7). Puns are another notable literary device. In 5:5, a popular shrine is threatened with a fate that sounds nearly identical to its name: "Gilgal (*hagilgal*) will surely go into exile (*galoh yigleh*)." This wordplay complicates the usually close relationship between name and identity in the Bible. (Contrast the straightforward assertion that YHWH's "name" denotes the deity's character as creator in the doxologies in 4:13, 5:8, and 9:6.) The vision report in 8:1–3 hinges on wordplay between the incongruous images "basket of fruit" (*qayits*) and "the end (*qets*) of my people Israel." For the

scribes who produced the book of Amos, these puns demonstrate a mastery of language. For its readers, they are profoundly destabilizing. Sherwood claims that Amos's language "signifies—at an extreme—the tyranny of a discourse that does not allow the audience to luxuriate in familiarity and stretch itself out in accepted meanings" (2001, 15). Ominously vague threats exacerbate the audience's anxiety. In the prophecies against foreign nations, for instance, the "it" that YHWH threatens not to "turn back" (1:3, 9, 11, etc.) is never identified. Similarly, at the end of the refrain poem in chapter 4, a poetic triplet threatens an unspecified disaster:

> Therefore, thus will I do to you, Israel;
> Because I will do this to you,
> Prepare to meet your God, Israel.
> (4:12)

(p. 428) The extensive repetition only underscores what is not said in the verse, forcing the audience to construct the vision of their own demise themselves. Additional destabilization results from the book's reversal of cherished religious beliefs, including Israel's election and special relationship with YHWH (3:1; 9:7) and their vindication on the enigmatic day of YHWH (5:18–20).

This evocative, disorienting poetry creates a terrifying literary world. At any moment, natural disasters like fire or earthquake could occur (5:6; 7:4; 8:8), or a wild animal could pounce. Atrocities are committed in war, and armies return from battle with their numbers reduced tenfold (5:3). Yet through it all, Israel's social elites throw lavish parties and perform religious rituals as though nothing unusual were happening (4:4–5; 6:4–6). The ultimate source of this violence is Israel's own patron deity. YHWH claims credit not only for future misfortunate but also a series of past devastations (4:6–11). The deity's resolution to punish is confirmed by solemn oaths in 4:2 and 6:8. Three hymnic doxologies praise YHWH for acts of creation, but even these emphasize the divine power to create "darkness" and "destruction" (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6). As a result, no place in the cosmos is safe from this deity (9:3–4). YHWH reveals these destructive intentions through prophets like Amos (3:7) but closes off all channels for avoiding them. Sacrifices are rejected (5:21–23); Amos's intercessions stop working (7:1–9); and even repentance cannot guarantee divine mercy (5:15). For this reason, the book's suddenly hopeful final vision comes quite unexpectedly. Ruined homes are rebuilt; the land becomes unimaginably fecund; and God promises never to displace the people again (9:11–15). The language of these closing verses explicitly reverses earlier claims in the book. For instance, 9:14 undoes the futility curse of 5:11; in 9:13, the land that once "melted" at God's touch (9:5) now "melts away" with the abundance of wine that it produces. Given the relentlessness with which the book has undermined the audience's prior expectations, perhaps it should be no surprise that the book finally undercuts the very expectations it has established. For some readers, the ending successfully transforms the book of Amos from tragedy to comedy. For others, the conclusion becomes a victim of the book's own destabilizing rhetoric and cannot be fully trusted (Linville 2008, 8).

The Historical Amos and the History of Amos

Scholarly literature on the formation of Amos is immense, with a variety of proposed reconstructions about how the book came to exist. At the risk of some oversimplification, the proposals can be grouped into three categories:

1. The book is largely the product of the eighth-century prophet Amos of Tekoa (e.g., Andersen and Freedman 1989; Paul 1991; Sweeney 2000);
(p. 429) **2.** The book is the product of a multi-stage composition over the course of three or four centuries (e.g., Eidevall 2017; Jeremias 1998; Radine 2010);
3. The book is largely the product of scribal elites in Persian-period Yehud (e.g., Coggins 2000; Davies 2009; Linville 2008).

These groups have various affinities with one another. For instance, scholars who argue for an entirely early (position 1) or late date (position 3) both view the book as a unified composition with a coherent structure (e.g., Andersen and Freedman 1989, 3–5; Coggins 2000, 77–78). As a result, they can better account for the structural or rhetorical importance of certain texts that many redaction-historical scholars identify as later additions with little connection to the book's central claims. For instance, Sweeney assumes that Amos was written during the first half of the eighth century, when Judah was a vassal of Israel, and reflects a Judahite nationalistic perspective. On this reading, it makes perfect sense for the book to have originally ended by promising to restore the "booth of David … as in days of old" (9:11), which Sweeney understands as the reestablishment of Davidic/Judahite rule over the former northern kingdom (2000, 1:192–195; see also Paul 1991, 288–291). At the other end of the chronological spectrum, Linville reads Amos as a Persian-period composition. He argues that the book's central concern is not the historical fall of the kingdom of Israel but rather the mythological destruction and recreation of the very cosmos (2008, 3–7). Some of Linville's interpretations seem forced, such as the connection of "ever-flowing streams" in 5:24 with the primeval waters of chaos (2008, 117), but his reading gives a more prominent place to the creation doxologies than other interpretations, which often gloss over them as late additions and thematic outliers.

Both scholars who date the whole book to the eighth century (position 1) and those who see it as a multistage composition (position 2) associate at least some portion of it with a historical prophet named Amos (with the notable exception of Radine). Based on the superscription in 1:1 and the narrative in 7:10–17, Amos was a Judahite agriculturalist who prophesied in Israel during the second quarter of the eighth century BCE—perhaps for no more than a year, based on the temporal reference "two years before the earthquake" in 1:1 (Jeremias 1998, 1). Most of these scholars attribute at least a core of chapters 3–6 to the historical prophet, in which case both the economic critique and warnings of Israel's imminent demise were original to his proclamation. The vision reports seem to track a significant development in Amos's thought, moving from hope that judgment can be averted (7:1–6) to the conviction that it is unavoidable (7:7–9; 8:1–3; see Andersen and Freedman 1989, 5–8, 65–67; Jeremias 1998, 2–3, 125–126). For many interpreters, the absence of references to Assyria indicates that Amos prophesied prior to the rise of Assyri-

an power in the 740s. Others, however, identify historical references in the book that suggest Amos's activity occurred, or at least continued, later in the eighth century, after the reign of Jeroboam II and closer to the fall of Israel in 722–720 BCE (Haran 2008).

In more recent scholarship, one finds greater skepticism about historical reconstructions of Amos's prophetic career. The superscription and Amaziah narrative are increasingly viewed as late, which raises questions about their historical validity (Coggins 2000, (p. 430) 72, 142–143; Eidevall 2017, 3–7). The vision reports may also belong to later stages of the book's development (Becker 2001; Eidevall 2017, 191–193). Doubts about the existence of a united monarchy under King David undermine arguments that Amos advocated for a reunified Davidic kingdom (Davies 2009, 60; Radine 2010, 4). These questions reflect larger scholarly trends, in which prophetic books are increasingly viewed as products of elite scribes. Even if they reflect historical prophetic activity, one cannot uncritically equate the prophet with the author. There may in fact have been no "writing prophets," in which case Amos loses one source of his/its traditional prestige as the first of this group. Further complicating the matter, the portrait of prophets like Amos as proclaimers of judgment contrasts starkly with surviving records of prophetic activity from other ancient Near Eastern cultures, in which prophets consistently support the state (Kratz 2003).

As a result of these developments, recent proposals for the eighth-century origins of the book of Amos differ markedly from those common just two decades ago. On the assumption that Amos's prophecies were similar to those from ancient Mari and Nineveh, Kratz (2003) argues that only parts of about two dozen verses from chapters 3–6 can be attributed to the historical prophet (e.g., 3:12, 15; 5:2–3, 16–17). These prophecies warned about a general disaster facing Israel but did not attribute it to divine judgment. Eidevall associates the book's earliest stages with prophetic activity in Judah, only a decade or so before the fall of Samaria (2017, 18–24). These prophecies would have been similar to pro-Judahite, anti-Israelite prophecies preserved in Isa 1–39. Although he does not rule out the possibility of a historical Amos, Eidevall argues that the character portrayed in the book, who travels to Israel from Judah during the reign of Jeroboam II, is a later fiction. Denying even the existence of a historical Amos, Radine argues that the bulk of Amos was composed in Judah decades after the Assyrian conquest of Israel. He maintains that the book's predictions of the demise of Israel were written after the fact (*ex-eventu*) and attributed to a fictional prophet, making it similar to ancient literary-predictive texts like the Babylonian *Marduk Prophecy* or the Egyptian *Prophecies of Neferti* (Radine 2010, 46–79, 110–129; see also Linville 2008, 21). Because of its radical implications for how Amos should be interpreted, Radine's proposal demands serious consideration, yet there are significant differences between Amos and ancient Near Eastern literary-predictive texts, which cover much longer periods of time and contain far more concrete historical references. Other scholars continue to find Amos a fruitful source for historical information about pre-exilic Israel or Judah, independently of reconstructing a historical prophet. Hutton (2014), for instance, plausibly connects the prophecies against foreign nations in chapters 1–2 to conflicts over control of Levantine trade routes, in which Israel was inex-

tricably implicated, while Schipper and Leuchter (2015) argue that 2:8 refers to ancestor veneration at the Bethel shrine.

Ultimately, the biblical book of Amos is a text, not a person, and must be accounted for as such. Despite the putative prophet's focus on Israel, several details reveal an overriding concern with Judah (1:1–2; 6:1; 9:11). In light of this emphasis, scholars increasingly explore the book's possible significance for later Judahite audiences. Radine thinks it originally served as a warning to Judah to avoid the sins that led to their northern (p. 431) neighbor's destruction, in which case its earliest version dates before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE (2010, 46–78). Jeremias argues that the early exilic edition of the book was its decisive developmental stage, which encouraged an audience of deported Judahites to recognize the seriousness of their predicament and take advantage of a final opportunity for repentance (1998, 7–8). Dating the book to the late fifth century BCE, Davies proposes that Amos's condemnation of Bethel—which rose in prominence as a religious shrine during the Neo-Babylonian period—promoted the centrality of the newly rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Davies 2009). For scholars who view Amos as part of an exilic compilation that also included Hosea, Micah, and Zephaniah ("the Book of the Four"), the book contributed to a particular theological interpretation of key events from Israel and Judah's history. To be fair, all of these proposals involve just as much historical reconstruction as proposals about an eighth-century prophet Amos, and some scholars like Coggins (2000, 79–80) consequently eschew them in favor of more purely literary analysis. On the other hand, they helpfully shift interpretive focus from the prophet Amos to the book called Amos, and they at least help contemporary readers imagine what the book might have meant to an ancient audience reading it as a text.

Justice, Worship, and Ecology in Amos

Of all the themes in the book of Amos, the impassioned demands for justice have most powerfully captured the imaginations of contemporary readers. The almost single-minded focus on socioeconomic issues makes Amos distinctive among biblical prophetic books (Houston 2008, 58). Amos's rhetoric has been amplified by its incorporation into the messages of prominent social critics, perhaps most notably Martin Luther King Jr. King quoted Amos 5:24 in his speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, and the verse also appears in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" from the same year. Along with generalized denunciations of socioeconomic injustice (e.g., 2:7; 5:7; 8:4), texts in Amos criticize specific exploitative practices with parallels in many historical periods: debt slavery (2:6; 8:6), possible sexual exploitation of workers (2:7),[3] property confiscation (2:8), judicial corruption (5:10, 12), excessive agricultural levies (5:11), and economic fraud (8:5–6). In addition, the actions of foreign nations condemned in chapters 1–2 reflect human rights violations that occur frequently in the context of war and, in some cases, are identified as war crimes by the Geneva Convention (Schlimm 2006; Smith-Christopher 2011).

Recent scholarship, however, has problematized the portrayal of Amos as a champion for the oppressed. Questions have been raised about the historicity of the injustices portrayed in the book. Interpreters have long situated Amos against a reconstructed portrait of eighth-century BCE Israel as an economically prosperous but stratified society, with widespread exploitation of the agricultural working class by an increasingly wealthy landowning class. Scholars like Clines (1995, 82), Coggins (2000, 76), and Eidevall (2017, 17), however, question this reconstruction, noting its circular (p. 432) reliance on evidence from the very text under interpretation, as well as the lack of external confirmation of its details. Countering such skepticism, other scholars combine ancient archaeological data with social-scientific evidence from more recent societies. This work suggests that a confluence of factors in ancient Israel and Judah created conditions in which economic exploitation became likely, including rapid urbanization, a growing administrative class, and increased agricultural specialization (Coomber 2011, 397–415; Houston 2008, 18–51). Of course, for interpreters who view the book of Amos as a product of Persian-period Judah, historical questions about the eighth century are largely irrelevant. The oppressive practices described in the book occurred during many periods of Israelite and Judahite history (compare Neh 5:2–5). Ultimately, the timelessness of Amos's critiques may be at least as important as their historicity.

Ideological criticism of Amos has been even more damning, challenging the book's unflattering portrayal of wealthy Samarians, the inclusiveness of its vision of justice, and its endorsement of divine violence. These critiques counter a long-standing tendency to simply presume the validity of Amos's claims, particularly among commentators with prior theological commitments to the truthfulness of the book (Clines 1995). Some scholars question the motivations behind Amos's accusations. Perhaps sarcastically, Clines speculates that he was jealous of the wealthy (1995, 80). Coomber argues that the eighth-century prophets' economic critiques could reflect a degree of self-interest; the same social changes that disadvantaged poor farmers would also have undermined the authority of traditional religious institutions, including prophecy (2011, 424–425). In their attempts to distance themselves from the perspectives expressed in the book, some ideological critics even express sympathy for the objects of Amos's criticism. Coggins accuses the poet of an *ad hominum* attack in 6:1–9, objecting that "even the rich have to sleep, to eat and drink, and may perhaps be allowed a little music and the keeping up of outward appearances" (2000, 135; see also Clines 1995, 78–81). With increased contemporary sensitivity to problems of income inequality and the disastrous ecological consequences of overconsumption, however, this defense of the actions described in the text seems untenable. (Whether or not we should presume the veracity of the accusations is a different question.)

Feminist critics have further challenged the gendered presentation of Amos's critiques. With the notable exceptions of 1:13 and 2:7, victims of injustice in Amos are overwhelmingly male, and unlike other biblical texts, Amos never advocates for "widows" as a socially vulnerable class (Bird 1997, 67–78; Houston 2008, 63). Sanderson criticizes Amos's attack on wealthy Samarian women in 4:1 for "choosing to condemn what he interpreted as the luxury of a minority of women in scathing terms while ignoring the oppression of a

majority of women"—especially since even upper-class women would have possessed limited power in a patriarchal society (1992, 206).[4] Even if one accepts the appropriateness of Amos's critique, the threat of divine punishment through natural disaster or military invasion remains troubling. Catastrophes like these would harm the entire population, not just the wealthy class. If anything, they would be even harder on poor persons with fewer resources for coping with them (Eidevall 2017, 31; Linville 2008, (p. 433) 116; Marlow 2009, 150).[5] Houston calls this "the paradox of Amos," that "Amos is remembered, not primarily as the prophet of the fall of Israel, but as the prophet of justice for the poor, even though the structure of his text serves the former end rather than the latter" (Houston 2008, 73). Clines finds the very idea of divine punishment in Amos ethically objectionable (1995, 92).

Despite these criticisms, which come largely from the academic worlds of Europe and North America, the rhetoric of Amos continues to resonate with contemporary readers from diverse contexts. In multiple publications, M. Daniel Carroll R. (2008) has argued extensively for the book's ongoing relevance in Latin American contexts, including a recent critique of religiously motivated nationalism based on Amos. Other global perspectives on Amos have appeared in recent years. Vengeyi uses the book to challenge the "gospel of prosperity" in West Africa, which blames Zimbabwe's extensive poverty on the sins of poor persons. He argues that Amos's attribution of poverty to socioeconomic factors should encourage Zimbabwean Christians to identify similarly concrete causes for contemporary poverty, including the legacy of colonialism, a history of governmental corruption, and the effects of Western sanctions (Vengeyi 2011). For Hwang, a distinctive feature of the prophetic books of Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah is their intersecting critiques of economic injustice, religious idolatry, and sexual immortality. This holistic perspective offers a model for an integrated theological and socioeconomic critique of contemporary global injustices, including "unrestrained economic development and its insatiable need for more resources, both human and natural; the exploitation and abuse of workers who lack basic human rights; rapid urbanization and the inability of new arrivals in the city to escape the cycle of debt and depravity; participation in the sex trade by the economically desperate; and a gap between rich and poor as wide as it is unbridgeable" (Hwang 2014, 203).

Related to the book's denunciations of economic justice is its critique of Israelite worship, especially at the Bethel shrine (3:14; 4:4; 5:5–6). These critiques reach their climax in 5:18–25, where the deity rejects the Israelites' festivals, sacrifices, and even songs. Similar invectives appear in other biblical books named for eighth-century prophets (Isa 1:11–17; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6–8). These critiques were taken by many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century interpreters as a categorical rejection of the sacrificial system of ancient Israel, despite its authorization by the Torah. In retrospect, this interpretation seems significantly informed by an anti-ritual bias inherited from Protestant Christianity. Recently, however, Barton has argued that one should not automatically dismiss the possibility of anti-ritualism in the Hebrew Bible, based on anthropological evidence for the emergence of such sentiments in traditional societies. He thinks that Amos 5:25 represents such a view, along with Jer 7:22 and Ps 50:9–12 (Barton 2005, 116–121). Most interpreters of

Amos, however, view the book's anti-sacrifice rhetoric as an elevation of ethical demands over cultic ones (e.g., Paul 1991, 192–193). Based on other examples of divine rejection of sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Gen 4:3–5; Num 16:15), Eidevall argues that Amos 5 does entail the total but temporary rejection of ancient Israelite worship, in anticipation of the imminent and unavertable fall of the northern kingdom (2017, 166–169).

(p. 434) Along with its reflections on the human socioeconomic sphere, Amos's references to nature have attracted attention from interpreters concerned with ecological justice. Depending on the degree of suspicion with which they approach the text, these interpreters vary considerably in their assessments of the value of Amos's rhetoric. For instance, Jobling and Loewen argue that Amos's figurative language devalues the natural world by using it as a cipher for understanding nonrelated concerns, rather than ascribing inherent worth to it. Thus, they consider 5:24 ecologically "problematic" because it uses "ever-flowing stream" as a metaphor for righteousness without acknowledging the fragility of actual water systems (Jobling and Loewen 2000, 84). Ellis, by contrast, argues that 5:24 demonstrates a close connection between natural order and moral order (2015, 267; see also Marlow 2009, 146). Similarly, Jobling and Loewen decry Amos's "purely instrumental" view of nature, in which it is God's means for punishing human sins (2000, 83), while Ellis claims that the book challenges the commodification of the natural world by denouncing the overconsumption of Israelite elites, which victimized poor humans and the land and its animals alike (2015, 261–262, 268). Further, according to Marlow, Amos emphasizes the agency of nonhuman creation by depicting its independent interactions with the deity (e.g., 1:1; 7:4; 9:6), contrasting nature's obedience to God's call with human disobedience (Marlow 2009, 133–137, 157). Despite these differences, these earth-oriented interpretations agree that Amos depicts nature as inherently dangerous, for instance in the repeated references to wild animals, which is "a positive reminder that nature does not exist for us" (Jobling and Loewen 2000, 81; see also Ellis 2015, 261; Marlow 2009, 147). All of these interpreters place special emphasis on Amos's doxologies, in which creation discloses God's tremendous power in a way that parallels prophetic revelation (Ellis 2015, 258–260; Jobling and Loewen 2000, 81–83; Marlow 2009, 139–146).

Conclusion

As this survey of Amos and its recent interpretation has shown, this short prophetic book attracts an outsized amount of attention. Its distinctive literary and thematic features, especially its sinister tone and violent portrayal of God, are ripe for aesthetic and theological analysis. Questions about Amos's formation and composition remain productive, although a shift in emphasis from the prophet to the book has become an increasingly common feature of scholarly work. The different proposed dates demonstrate that the book held potential meaning for ancient Israelite and Judahite readers over many centuries across the first millennium BCE. That relevance is not limited to antiquity, as debates about Amos's ongoing relevance address the usefulness of the book's rhetoric about so-

cioeconomic justice and the value of the nonhuman, natural world. No doubt this remarkable text will continue to generate fresh questions and find meaning in yet new contexts.

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Notes:

([1.]) Most scholars propose a three-part division, in which chapters 7–9 cohere around five visions (7:1–3, 4–6, 7–9; 8:1–3; 9:1–4). According to one understanding of Amos's composition, these were balanced by five original prophecies against foreign nations (those against Tyre, Edom, and Judah being later additions) in a possible early version of the book (Jeremias 1998, 6, 19–25). Even among scholars who do not accept this proposal, the understanding of chapters 7–9 as a single unit persists (e.g., Coggins 2000, 77–78; Eidevall 2017, 13–14). There are key differences between the prose in 7:1–8:3 and the poetry of 9:1–4, however, that justify treating them separately.

([2.]) All biblical quotations are the author's translation.

([3.]) The third line of 2:7 (literally "a man and his father go to the girl") remains an interpretive conundrum. Many commentators view it as a critique of the sexual abuse of economically vulnerable young women (Coggins 2000, 103; Houston 2008, 61; Paul 1991, 82–83).

([4.]) In the most recent edition of the *Women's Bible Commentary*, Sanderson's commentary on Amos has been replaced by one by Amy Erickson, who seems less troubled by 4:1 but discusses other elements of the book that could be harmful to women, such as the portrayal of redemptive violence in 4:6–11 in ways that suggest cycles of domestic abuse (Erickson 2012, 315).

([5.]) Linville acknowledges that this line of reasoning might be "cynical." The concern is not exclusive to modern interpreters. If 9:8b–10, which limits judgment to "sinners," is a late addition to the book, then already in antiquity a reader of Amos was uncomfortable with the totality of its envisioned judgment.

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Obadiah

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay touches on three topics: (1) the relation between Obadiah and Jeremiah not as an instance of one prophet quoting the other but as an example of both prophets quoting a traditional anthem; (2) the animosity between Edom and Judah in the book of Obadiah as not referring to Edom's role during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem but reflecting postexilic struggles after the Edomite occupation of Southern Judah; and (3) Obadiah's conceptual coherence as a separate book. The contribution ends with a few hermeneutical remarks on the violent character of vengeance.

Keywords: Obadiah, Edom, conquest of Jerusalem, intertextuality, vengeance, Jeremiah, violence

CONTAINING nearly three hundred words, the book of Obadiah is the most minor among the books of the Minor Prophets. Generally, Obadiah is construed as being composed with two textual blocks:*

1. Obad 1–14 Prophecy of doom for Edom motivated by the evil it had done to Judah

2. Obad 15–21 A judgment concerning all nations except for Judah which will be restored to its former glory

This clear outline as well as the shortness of the biblical book does not, however, imply that this text is easily understood. Ever since the rise of critical biblical scholarship,[1] questions have arisen with regard to its authorship, its composition, its historical anchoring, its message, and its function within the Book of the Twelve. In this contribution, I will neither describe in full detail the two centuries of research into Obadiah nor focus on ephemeral or evanescent issues. I would like to focus on four topics that have been—and in my opinion will remain—of importance for the reading of this writing.

Master, Pupil, or Traditionalist? Connections with Jeremiah

It often has been observed that some lines in the first section of Obadiah are similar to some lines in the oracle against Edom in Jer 49:

Obadiah 1b–5, 8 (NASB)	**Jeremiah 49:14–16, 9, 7 (NASB)**
We have heard a report from the LORD, And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying,	I have heard a message from the LORD, And an envoy is sent among the nations, saying,
“Arise and let us go against her for battle”— “Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You are greatly despised. The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, You who live in the clefts of the rock, In the loftiness of your dwelling place, Who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to earth?’ “Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD. “If thieves came to you, If robbers by night— “O how you will be ruined!— Would they not steal only until they had enough? If grape gatherers came to you, Would they not leave *some* gleanings? … “Will I not on that day,” declares the LORD, “Destroy wise men from Edom And understanding from the mountain of Esau?”	“Gather yourselves together and come against her, And rise up for battle!” “For behold, I have made you small among the nations, Despised among men. “As for the terror of you, The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, O you who live in the clefts of the rock, Who occupy the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as an eagle’s, I will bring you down from there,” declares the LORD. (14–16) … “If grape gatherers came to you, Would they not leave gleanings? If thieves came by night, They would destroy only until they had enough.” (9) … “Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman? Has good counsel been lost to the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?” (7)

(p. 438) There are clear similarities between these texts, yet some discrepancies should also be noted. In addition to a different order of the lines, there are some instances of different phrasing. I will only mention two. In Obadiah, the invulnerability of Edom is phrased as a question: “Who will bring me down to earth?” In Jeremiah, the same theme is presented as an oracle of doom: “‘I will bring you down from there,’ declares the LORD.” Jeremiah predicts that wisdom will leave Teman, while in the corresponding lines in Obadiah this place name is not mentioned.

These differences imply that the parallel between Obadiah and Jeremiah cannot be classified as a quotation. The similarities, however, strongly suggest either borrowing or adaptation. There is a long and unfinished discussion about the direction of the textual transfer. Most scholars argue for a Jeremian origin, adopted by Obadiah (e.g. Jäger 1837, 58–74; Raabe 1996, 22–31; Wöhrle 2008, 192–203; Hagedorn 2012, 175–224).

Already in 1843, Paul Caspari developed a matrix of seven different ways to deal with the phenomenon of parallel texts, quotations, and borrowings within the Hebrew Bible (Caspari 1843, 1–73; adopted by Schultz 1999). One of the many ways to understand a parallelism is to construe both texts as quoting or elaborating an older source or tradition. As for the Obadiah-Jeremiah parallel, it has been proposed that both—the author/redactor of Jeremiah as well as the redactor/author of Obadiah—quote (p. 439) from an existing pre-exilic prophecy (e.g., Wolff 1986; Watts 1975, 51–71; van Leeuwen, 1993, 25). John Watts has argued that such quotations of older prophecies prove that prophetic words were actualized and appropriated in new situations (Watts 1975, 51–71). Such a view absolves the scholar of the difficult exercise of constructing a timetable of the occasions on which Jeremiah and Obadiah would have spoken this prophecy and when and where the words were written down and borrowed from the other prophet.

I would like to further explore this trail by assuming that the writers of both biblical books were referring to an ancient hymn on Edom. As yet, I do not have a full and convincing argument for this position, but a few things are apparent. The only other prophecy against Edom in the Hebrew Bible dates later than Obadiah and Jeremiah (Ezek 25:12–14). Throughout the Hebrew Bible Edom and Israel are presented as badly behaving brothers and as friendly foes. Friendship between the two is alternated with animosity. In the narrative on Balaam in Num 24:18–19a, a prophetic hymn on Edom can be found:

> Edom will be conquered;
> Seir, his enemy, will be conquered,
> but Israel will grow strong.
> A ruler will come out of Jacob
> and destroy the survivors of the city.(NIV)

These words are embedded between sayings directed to Moab and Amalek. Although there are no direct connections between this saying and the texts in Obadiah and Jeremiah, the clear thematic correspondence at the level of the downfall of Edom could be an in-

dication that a hymnic text like Num 14:18–19 could have been the source text on which later editors elaborated.[2]

It might well be that in the era of Obadiah and Jeremiah, something happened or some acts were undertaken that revived the old hymn and birthed a new form of the old hymn. This brings me to a more historical topic.

Edom and the Conquest of Jerusalem

The book of Obadiah contains a prophecy of doom toward Edom:

> “Shall I not on that day”—Oracle of the LORD—
>
> “Destroy both the sages from Edom
>
> And wisdom from the mountain of Esau?
>
> Your mighty men will be shattered, O Teman!
>
> With the result that all men from the mountain of Esau will be eradicated by a killing.
>
> (p. 440) Because of the violence towards your sibling Jacob
>
> You will be covered with defamation.
>
> You will be cut off forever.” (8–9; AT)

This textual unit is not in need of clarification, since it announces the forthcoming complete and final destruction of Edom. Intriguingly, two groups within the people of Edom are mentioned: “sages” and “mighty men.” Both were pillars of the Edomite society, since wisdom as well as military power defends a nation from destruction. Teman was the name of one of the most important Edomite tribes, famous for its martial art. The reason for forthcoming destruction is to be found in the recent past:

> On the day that you stood aloof,
> On the day that strangers carried away its wealth
> And strangers entered its gates
> And cast the ill-fate over Jerusalem,
> Even you were like one of them.
> You should not have looked on the day of your sibling,
> On the day he became a stranger.
> You should not have rejoiced over the Judahites
> On the day of their destruction.
> You should not have raised your voice
> On the day of distress.
> You should not have entered into the gate of my people
> On the day of their calamity.

> You should not have looked in a gloating way
> On the day of its calamity.
> You should not have taken its wealth
> On the day of its calamity.
> You should not have stood at the crossroads
> To finish of its refugees.
> You should not have incarcerated
> Its survivors on the day of distress.
> For the day of the LORD is close
> On all the nations.
> As you have done,
> It will be done to you.
> Your recompense will be returned upon you. (11–14; AT)

The motivation for this destruction is the "betrayal of Edom." This phrase refers to the suspicious role Edom played in 587 BCE. The image arises of the Edomites conspiring with the Babylonians during the siege of Jerusalem hoping for economic advantages as a result of their collaboration. For some scholars, this connection is a decisive argument for the dating of the composition of Obadiah. According to Paul Raabe, for instance, the biblical (p. 441) book would have been written shortly after the factual betrayal (Raabe 1996, 47–56).

The book of Obadiah is not unique for this view of Edomite deeds. Various biblical and postbiblical texts refer to the cruel and malicious role the Edomites played during the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II (Tebes 2011, 219–255). Traces of this tradition, for instance, can be found in the book of Ezekiel. According to Ezek 25:12–14, God will take revenge on the Edomites because they grievously offended Judah. In this passage the guilt of Edom is not portrayed in great detail, but it seems safe to construe it as a reference to the "betrayal of Edom." Ezekiel 35 contains a prophecy of doom against Seir (the name of a mountain in southern Edom), motivated by the lack of hate for bloodshed among the Edomites (Ezek 35:6–7).

The theme is also referred to in a well-known Psalm, composed by the rivers of Babylon:

> Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
> the day of Jerusalem,
> how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare,
> down to its foundations!" (Ps 137:7, ESV; see Becking 2012, 279–299)

The unique collocation "the day of Jerusalem" refers to the final conquest of the city by the Babylonians, the destruction of the temple, and the forced migration of greater parts of the population. In the Psalm, God is invited to remember "the day of Jerusalem." The meaning of the verb *zakar* ("remember") in this verse differs from the meaning of the same verb earlier in the Psalm. In vss. 5 and 6 *zakar* refers to the mournful memory of days long gone. In v. 7 the verb is connected to the language of revenge, namely the principle of *lex tallionis*, "an eye for an eye." The Psalmist asks God to take revenge upon Edom—and also Babylon—for their vicious deeds in a comparable way.

The tradition is also found in the apocryphal book of *1 Esdras*, sometimes labeled 3 Esra (see Bird 2012). This book contains a translation, and sometimes a retelling, into Greek of passages from 2 Chron 35–36, Ezra 1–10, and Neh 7–8. The text starts in the middle of a sentence and ends halfway in a clause; this twofold peculiarity is due to the fact that in the manuscript tradition of *1 Esdras* one or more pages have been lost at the beginning as well as at the end. Of great importance is the inclusion of the story of the three youths who organized a contest on the question "what is the strongest." This story resembles Hellenistic court tales and is integrated into the text of *1 Esdras*. The book hence dates to the Hellenistic period. Zerubbabel wins the contest by arguing that the truth is stronger than kings, wine, or women. Darius grants him "everything he wishes." The pious Zerubbabel does not ask for earthly wealth but for the return of his people from the exile and the rebuilding of the ruined temple in Jerusalem. On his request Zerubbabel claims the destruction of the temple as a deed of Edomite enmity:

> (p. 442) [You] also have vowed to build up the temple, which the Edomites burned when Judea was made desolate by the Chaldees.(*I Esdras* 4:45; LXX Brenton translation)

The Persian king does not refuse this request. He writes an order to all those in power to guarantee Zerubbabel and his people safe travel. Those returning from exile are offered to live freely in their land and it is even stated that:

> … the Edomites should give over the villages of the Jews which then they held. (*I Esdras* 4:50; LXX Brenton translation)

This passage implies that the Edomites conquered Judaean territory after 587 BCE.

If this tradition of the betrayal of Edom is correct, it would supply a peg to hang the coat of history of Obadiah as a prophetic reflection on the unbrotherly acts of the Edomites.[3] The historical reliability of this tradition is not, however, easily proven. The assumed Edomite acts are not narrated in the sections of 2 Kings or 2 Chronicles that deal with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. No traces of Edomite involvement in the conquest of Jerusalem in 587 BCE have been found in archaeological excavations. No Edomite arrowheads have been found, while arrowheads of Scythian origin have been discovered that hint at the presence of trained mercenaries from the steppes of Asia in the Babylonian army (Avigad 1980). It is therefore probable to assume that Edom and the Edomites did not play a vicious role in the conquest of Jerusalem (see, e.g., Bartlett 1982, 13–24; Ben Zvi 1996, 236–237; Lipschits 2005, 143–144). A one-to-one historical connection between the conquest of Jerusalem and the book of Obadiah is not obvious.

What is clear, however, is that after the conquest of Jerusalem greater parts of the southern fringe of Judah became Edomite territory. Some scholars argue that the Edomites occupied southern Judah soon after the conquest of Jerusalem (Oded 1977, 475; Wolff 1986, 53; Beith-Arieh 1995). Others date this occupation later (Lipschits 2005, 181–184; Kloner and Stern 2007, 139–144; O'Brien 2008, 164–165). The presence of Edomite earthenware in this area and the Edomite inscriptions excavated at Ḥorvat 'Uza and Ḥorvat Qitmit

clearly hint at Edomite occupation (Lipschits 2005, 181–184; Beith-Arieh 2007, 122–187), and neo-Babylonian inscriptions up to the time of Nabonidus (533) reflect a favorable stand of the Babylonians toward Edom (see Beaulieu 1989, 165–185).

The constant quarrels between the Persian province Yehud and the Edomites in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE should hence be seen as the delivery room for the traditions leading to the book of Obadiah. This book articulates and ventilates the way in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem and surroundings found a way to cope with the Edomite threat. Not a single event but a string of events stands at the background of this biblical book. This also indicates that Obadiah in its present form is the final product of a process of redaction and rewriting.

(p. 443) Obadiah amid His Peers: Single Book or Part of a Greater Work?

Obadiah is one of the books of the Twelve Minor Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, raising the question of whether the book should be read on its own or as part of a greater whole. Hans Walter Wolff, for instance, reads Obadiah as an explanatory commentary on Joel and Amos (Wolff 1986, 1) This question was deepened by the *redaktionsgeschichtliche Welle*. This redaction-historical method analyzes redactional stages of a composition looking for ways in which the redactor reapplied existing traditions to changed situations. One of the first important fruits on this new branch of scholarship was the analysis by Walter Dietrich of the redactional growth of the book of Kings (Dietrich 1972).

Around 1990 the method was adopted by scholars working on the Book of the Twelve. James Nogalski is a pioneer in this approach. In his monographs he argues for the presence of similarly phrased small building blocks at the end of one prophetic book and the beginning of the next. This phenomenon, he claims, reveals that starting in the exilic period the “books” of the minor prophets were collected and redactionally connected. Smaller groups of prophetic sayings were connected and collected into larger units crossing the boundaries of the present twelve books (Nogalski 1993a, 1993b).

A second wave of studies on the emergence and growth of the Twelve began ten years later, followed by a third wave of the *redaktionsgeschichtliche* approach in the twenty-first century. These studies propose an even more complicated redactional process behind the present textual form of the Dodekapropheton, positing the steady growth of texts and collections. During this long process, various texts influenced each other reciprocally. Other works explore these proposals in detail (e.g., Wöhrle 2006, 2008; Hagedorn 2012; LeCureux 2012), and I will concentrate here on the role of the Obadiah tradition in this process.

James Nogalski proposes the following redaction process of the book of Obadiah (Nogalski 1993b, 58–92). First, an early postexilic author reworked Jer 49:14–16:9 to form a prophecy of doom against Edom (Obad 1–14,15b). The author made the words from Jere-

miah fit the Book of the Twelve, mainly by making a bridge from the preceding book of Amos. Words and phrases in Amos 9:11 and 13 are, according to Nogalski, so similar to Obad 8 that the words are the two ends of one binding lace. In a second step, the text of Obadiah was expanded by the addition of 15a, 16–18, and 19–21. Here, Nogalski detects a connection with the book of Micah, which once followed it in the collection. He observes a set of similarities between Mic 1:1–7 and Obad 15a, 16–18, and 19–21. By this addition, the message of Obadiah was slightly altered. The impending divine attack no longer is solely against Edom but includes the "house of Jacob," the territory of the former Northern Kingdom inhabited after the exile by proto-Samaritans. The reward for Judah, too, is set in a more geopolitical view. Finally, small additions at the beginning of 16 and at the end of 21 frame the future restoration of Judah with a theology in which (p. 444) the holiness of Zion (16) and the kingdom of YHWH (21) play a role. These redactions are dated by Nogalski somewhat broadly in the late Persian and early Hellenistic era.

Although working with an approximately comparable method, Jakob Wöhrle arrives at a different conclusion (Wöhrle 2008, 192–218). In his view, the main body of the biblical book is to be read as a *Fortschreibung* of an earlier collection of prophetic traditions, the "Fremdvölker-Korpus I."[4] The core of the book of Obadiah is, in his view, part of a redactional layer throughout the Minor Prophets that he labels "Fremdvölkerschicht II" ("layer containing words against other nations"). After expanding the "Fremdvölker-Korpus I" with the "Fremdvölkerschicht II," the "Fremdvölker-Korpus II" was formed. This (according to Wöhrle) early Hellenistic composition stressed the belief that YHWH will descend to the worldly realm in order to liberate his chosen people. Wöhrle construes the core of Obadiah to be the whole book with the exception of v. 17a. He argues convincingly that v. 15a as well as 16–21 form a coherent whole with 1–14.15b. Differently than Nogalski, Wöhrle rates the role of the nations in the downfall of Edom and the liberation of Judah as a theme already present in the first part of Obadiah. The envoy in v. 1 is sent to "all nations." According to Wöhrle, v. 17a introduces a different theme, that of salvation for the nations. He construes this verse as part of a redaction from the Hellenistic era that led to the third phase in the compositional history of the book of the Twelve: the "Heil für die Völker-Korpus" ("salvation for the nations redaction"). Traces of the fourth redaction of the Book of the Twelve, the "Gnaden Korpus" ("grace redaction"), are absent from Obadiah.

These proposals are problematic. First, the analysis is mainly of a linguistic character—a comparison of words and phrases—and would be more persuasive if the proposed redactional processes were linked with an historical analysis of the relations between Yehud/Judah and Edom during the Persian and early Hellenistic eras. Second, the proposals are not based on a literary-critical analysis of the text of the book of Obadiah itself. The question remains whether the literary fractures detected by a comparison with co-texts in the Book of the Twelve are really disruptions in the unfolding prophetic argument of the biblical book. Anselm Hagedorn has offered a redaction-historical analysis of Obadiah, based on literary-critical criteria, that deviates from the proposals of Nogalski and Wöhrle (Hagedorn 2012, 175–218). Third, Hans Renkema has rather convincingly argued for the

literary and conceptual coherence of Obadiah (Renkema, 2003, 230–276; Snyman 1989; Raabe 1996, 18–22; Dick 2005). Applying a sophisticated linguistic theory, Colin Toffelmire arrives at the conclusion that Obadiah can be seen as written by one author (Toffelmire 2015). I agree with them that the present text of Obadiah is a coherent unit. On the other hand, the assumption that texts were subject to ongoing redactional process stands to reason: new historical, political, and social circumstances triggered the process of rewriting (Weimar 1985).

A more hermeneutical approach is taken by Marvin Sweeney (2016). His approach is similar to Renkema, although his argument for the unity of Obadiah is more literary and form-critical. Sweeney stresses the importance of the different order of the Twelve books in the Hebrew and in the Greek traditions. In the MT, Obadiah is preceded by Amos;[5] in the LXX, Obadiah is placed after Joel. Sweeney argues that each order produces a different theological concept. In the sequence of the MT, the role of Jerusalem is (p. 445) emphasized in the relation of the city and its temple to Israel/Judah as well as to the other nations (Sweeney 2016, 74–77), while the configuration of the LXX stresses the themes of punishment and restoration (Sweeney 2016, 71–74). Sweeney questions Nogalski's argument for a concatenation between the end of Amos and the beginning of Obadiah (Nogalski 1993a, 21–57; 1993b, 58–92). With Sweeney, I find the catchword connection between the restored booth of David and the subjugation of Edom as rather loose and not very convincing (Sweeney 2016, 77–78). Moreover, it does not account for the sequence of the Minor Prophets in the Greek tradition. Sweeney here refers to the work of Siegfried Bergler, who points to a few dozen parallels between Joel and Obadiah at the level of words and phrases (Bergler 1988). Sweeney argues that this connection between Joel and Obadiah is much stronger that the one between Amos and Obadiah. He proposes that Joel was composed as a commentary on Obadiah and placed before that book in the Greek tradition. In the rearrangement of the MT, this connection was not valued, and as a result the link was broken (Sweeney 2016, 78–84). In sum, the book of Obadiah can be read in two different ways depending on the order of the Twelve.

In my view, the question of whether Obadiah should be read separately or as part of the Book of Twelve has not yet been convincingly decided. More research is needed. The answer probably will be found in accepting the dual character of the Twelve as a more or less coherent Book containing twelve separate books that can be read on their own as well as in the co-text of the Dodekapropheton. This double horizon should be the starting point of the history of reception of Obadiah.

The Violence of Vengeance

The book of Obadiah proclaims vengeance. This becomes clear in the description of the forthcoming day of YHWH:

> The day of YHWH is near
> for all nations.
> As you have done, it will be done to you;

> your deeds will return upon your own head.
> Just as you drank on my holy hill,
> so, all the nations will drink continually. (15–16a; NIV)

Edom will be punished for what it did to Judah, and Judah will regain its independence at the expense of the Edomites. This prophecy of salvation for Judah, however, has its price. Joy for one nation is balanced by deep sorrow for another.

Vengeance is a seemingly ineradicable form of human conduct. Until this day, it is for many people a primary reaction to take revenge for what has been done to them. The examples are numerous, from the story of Cain and Abel to the Crusades and World War II (p. 446) to the genocides of modern times (see, for instance, Peels 1995, 61–69; Throop 2016; Utley 1948; Simon 2016). Vengeance is often religiously motivated or religion is used as a cover for violence. Many people justify their violent behavior by referring to the theme of vengeance in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the Qur'an (see Peels 1995; Qur'an 61:92; 75:45).

Civilization should, in my opinion, suppress the mechanisms of vengeance. Punishment—if needed—is a matter for the judicial institutions and not for personal revenge. This is true in an ideal world. The fact that in Obadiah vengeance is seen as the beginning of a new future causes a moral and hermeneutical problem. How should we "read" this claim in a violent age when the text could be used as justification for acts of torture and genocide?

There is no clear-cut answer to this question. I will, therefore, make a detour. In a sermon "on the good works" from 1521, Martin Luther softly attacks the seemingly limitless power of the rulers of his age with a dictum: "when the wagoner is drunk, you may put a spoke in his wheel." Dietrich Bonhoeffer reapplied this saying as an argument for the desirability of the murder of a tyrant, Adolph Hitler (Retter 2008). Transferring this idea to the trouble spots of our world, I could imagine that when one group, tribe, or nation is suppressing "the other" in such a way that humanity is at stake, a short and focused act of vengeance is justifiable. Generally, however, people should follow the path of harmony and reconciliation.

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Notes:

(*) In view of the limits given, I was unable to refer to everything that has been written on the biblical book. I apologize to colleagues and friends.

(1.) I take the historical approach of Jäger (1837) and the commentary by Caspari (1842) to be the earliest scholarly readings of the prophetic book.

(2.) I am aware of the fact that the dating of the Balaam-tradition in Num 22–24 is debated and that it is uncertain whether this story predates the compositions of Obadiah and Jeremiah (Noort 2008, 1–23; Sals 2008, 315–335).

(3.) Many scholars accept the betrayal of Edom as an historical fact (e.g., Wolff 1986; Beith-Arieh 1995, 314; Raabe 1996, 52–53; Anderson 2011, 177–202).

(4.) This collection of texts directed against other nations would contain the core of the books of Joel, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah; see Wöhrle (2006) and Wöhrle (2008, 23–171).

(5.) The “Masoretic order” is also present in the second-century BCE Hebrew text in a scroll from Wadi Muraba’at (Mur XII), in the first-century BCE Greek text from Naḥal Ḥever (8ḤevXIIGr), and in the Aramaic Targum Jonathan.

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Jonah

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay considers the book of Jonah, the paradoxical figure for whom the book is named, its global narrative, themes and motifs, and contested issues. The article makes clear that while many readers believe that they know the story of Jonah, its storybook appearance belies its narrative complexity. Over the history of interpretation, the figure of Jonah son of Amittai has been regarded as both hero and antihero. Jonah is not called a prophet in the book. The book is written mostly in prose rather than poetry, and in contrast to other prophetic literature, it is a story about a prophet more than it is a prophetic text; thus, it could easily fit among the historical narratives or short stories in the Hebrew Bible. It remains a favorite among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, as well as and nonreligious audiences.

Keywords: Jonah, Nineveh, great fish, lying prophet, satire, repentance, compassion, Midrash, foreigners, Qur'an

THE story of Jonah, to borrow a phrase from Yvonne Sherwood, has had a multitude of afterlives and thus demonstrates an "extraordinary capacity for cultural survival" in Western civilization (Sherwood 2001, 3). Jonah's story extends beyond the West, however. The book of Jonah has not only captured the interpretive imaginations of Jewish readers of the Tanakh, Christian readers of the Old Testament, and Muslim readers of the Qur'an for its moral and theological lessons but has also inspired a great many literary and artistic works solely because of its sensational tale. In the words of James Limburg, "The book of Jonah has never been the exclusive property of theologians or members of religious communities" (Limburg 1993, 9) but is universally appreciated. As such, the story of a reluctant prophet being swallowed whole by a large fish and spat out on dry land unblemished after three days in the fish's belly has appealed to readers for many centuries. Adding to its attractiveness is its accessibility. The book of Jonah is only four short chapters in length, yet the size of this book disguises the depth of exegetical issues beyond whether Jonah was swallowed by a fish or a whale or whether or not a human could survive in the belly of a fish for three days. Also at play are such contested issues as the literary unity, genre, date, and message of Jonah.

Many readers would not be surprised to learn that Jonah is considered as a prophetic book. Jonah's prophetic designation, on one hand, is taken for granted given that Jonah is included in the Book of the Twelve or Minor Prophets. On the other hand, the figure of Jonah son of Amittai is never identified in the book of Jonah by the title "prophet," and the book contains only a single prophetic saying, an oracle against the nation of Nineveh (Jonah 3:4). Even here the expected messenger formula "Thus say YHWH" that would lend divine authority to his words is absent. Further setting the book apart from other prophetic literature is that Jonah is the only prophetic figure who is sent to a foreign nation to bring God's message to a foreign people. Additionally, the book stands out among the other prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible in its style. Compared to other prophetic literature, it reads more like prose than poetry. Finally, it is a story *about* a prophet rather than a prophetic text.

(p. 450) The Jonah in the book was associated by ancient readers with a prophet named Jonah son of Amittai from Gath-hepher in northern Israel mentioned in 2 Kgs 14:25–27. 2 Kings credits Jeroboam II (793–753 BCE) with the restoration and expansion of the original borders of Israel through the divine word of God delivered to a prophet named Jonah. The book of Jonah itself does not mention the prophet's place of origin, offering no support for linking the figures in Jonah and 2 Kings. The Christian New Testament does attest to the prophet Jonah (Matt 12:38–41; Luke 11:29–32) as does the Muslim tradition (Qur'an 37:139–148). For these reasons, Jonah's place among the prophets is ensconced in the minds of many readers.

Jonah within the Book of the Twelve

The placement of Jonah within the Book of the Twelve varies depending on the manuscript. The Tanakh and most versions of the Christian Old Testament (Protestant and Roman Catholic) follow the order of the Masoretic tradition, which places Jonah fifth sequentially. The Roman Catholic Church adopted the Latin Vulgate of the Bible prepared by Jerome (400 CE), which follows the MT. Many Orthodox traditions follow the Vaticanus and Alexandrinus codices of the Septuagint (LXX), dating to the fourth century CE, which place Jonah sixth in sequential order: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.[1] While the second-century CE Hebrew scroll of the Twelve found at Wadi Murabba'at near the Dead Sea follows the MT sequence, the Jewish apocryphal witness in 4 Ezra 1:30–40 (2 Esdras 1:30–40) is arranged in the same way as the LXX. Scholars have debated which order is earlier but have not come to any consensus. The dispute is complicated by a third extant manuscript with a different placement for Jonah: the Qumran manuscript 4QXII^{a} from the second century BCE places Jonah after Malachi, the last book in the MT and LXX. Yet differently, a late first-century CE pseudepigraphal work known as the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* places Jonah between Obadiah and Nahum, following the LXX. The different arrangements of Jonah in both canonical and literary works suggest that although it was

interpreted differently by different communities, its inclusion among the Twelve was universally accepted.

Explanations for the different orders of Jonah in the Hebrew and Greek texts include chronology, length of the writings, and catchwords. The Greek manuscripts appear to be arranged chronologically according to their superscriptions, which mention eighth-century kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Jeroboam (for a more detailed treatment of the chronological arrangement of the Twelve, see Sweeney 2000). According to this argument, Jonah should appear after Micah, given the traditional identification with the eighth-century prophet mentioned in 2 Kings, but Obadiah's placement before Jonah may emerge from the identification of an official named Obadiah who served in the court of King Ahab in the time of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:3) with the Obadiah of the eponymous book, that is, historically prior to Jonah. Jonah's position before Nahum may be due to the latter's report of Nineveh's destruction.

(p. 451) One explanation of the order of the Twelve in the LXX in based on their size: the first five are arranged by decreasing size. Because Obadiah, the shortest book in the Hebrew Bible, precedes Jonah in the LXX, such an explanation is not easily defended. Other scholars have proposed that the MT order was influenced by such factors as vocabulary, "catchwords," and major ideas and themes shared among two or more books. For example, commentators note that in the MT the same phrase "YHWH roars from Zion" appears in the final chapter of Joel (Joel 3:16 [Heb. 4:16]) and the beginning of Amos (Amos 1:2). Likewise, the phrase "the day of YHWH" appears to link Joel, Amos, and Obadiah in the first six books, a motif that is absent in Jonah. As one can see, theories for the order of the Twelve and Jonah's place within it abound. Even so, whatever the sequence, Jack Sasson's observation that the order of Jonah in the Book of the Twelve would likely have little influence on the reader's understanding of its contents is worth consideration (Sasson 1990, 15).

Structure

The narrative structure of the book of Jonah follows what some scholars refer to as its "global" narrative structure: two parallel scenes of almost equal length consisting of chapters 1–2 and 3–4. In the first scene YHWH commissions Jonah to preach judgment on Nineveh, but Jonah refuses and flees in a ship headed for Tarshish. YHWH stirs up a storm and the ship's crew tosses Jonah into the sea to save themselves. Jonah is swallowed by a big fish and prays to YHWH from the belly of the fish. YHWH speaks to the fish and it vomits Jonah onto dry land (1:1–2:10 [Heb. 2:11]). In the second scene Jonah fulfills his mission, the people and king of Nineveh repent, and YHWH relents. Jonah becomes angry and sulks, and YHWH poses several rhetorical questions about whether or not it is the deity's prerogative to have a change of mind (3:9–4:11). It is a story that Aaron Schart describes as "neatly structured in child-like language" (Schart 2012, 110).

While this narrative structure might appear simplistic in its recounting, specific features in the book are more complex upon further examination. For one, the narrative character of the book established by its opening *wayyiqtol* verbal form *wayehi* and *waw*-conversive has led to debate about just what kind of prophetic book this is. While it is not unusual for *wayehi* to appear as the opening phrase at the beginning of prose narratives in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Joshua; Judges; 1 and 2 Samuel), it *is* unusual for a prophetic book. This phrase is usually translated in English as "Now it came to pass" or "And it happened that," indicating a continuing narrative discourse of some previous event or scene, but Jonah begins a new narrative and offers a story about a prophet. This has led such scholars as James Limburg to note that Jonah could just as easily have been placed among the historical narratives in the book of Kings, the short stories of Ruth and Esther in the Writings, or the second-century BCE apocryphal book of Tobit, a story which "starts and ends in Nineveh and in fact refers twice to Jonah's prophecy about the city (Tobit 14:4, 8 RSV)" (Limburg 1993, 19) as among the prophets. Other prophetic (p. 452) literature such as Isaiah and Jeremiah contain narrative portions, but Jonah's *wayyiqtol* form followed by the divine word to Jonah distinguishes it from other prophetic accounts.

The skill with which the author arranged the literary structure of Jonah is another example of the book's complexity. Scholars generally agree that Jonah is divided into four episodes under such headings as The Commissioning of Jonah (1:1–3), The Drama at Sea (1:4–2:10 [Heb, 2:11]), The Recommissioning of Jonah (3:1–3a), The Drama on Land (3:3–4:11) (Roop 2002, 100); or, alternatively, Jonah on the Sea (1:1–16), Jonah in the Sea (1:17–2:10 [Heb. 2:11]), Jonah in Nineveh (3:1–10), and Jonah outside Nineveh (4:1–10) (Nogalski 2011, 403). Each episode emphasizes the movement of Jonah within the text. YHWH commands him to rise up and go to Nineveh because its evil has risen up to YHWH, but Jonah rises and flees from YHWH (1:1–2) and in turn goes down to Joppa, down into the ship's hold, and down into the sea (1:3, 5, 15). Jonah is commanded a second time to rise and go to Nineveh (3:2), and in response to Jonah's message the king of Nineveh rises and repents (3:6). Eugene Roop observes that "all the words in this tightly packed narration work together to put distance between Jonah and God" (Roop 2002, 108).

The episodes are further divided by the interaction of Jonah with the non-Israelites in the book. In scene 1, Jonah encounters the ship's foreign crew (Jonah 1:4–16). In scene 2, Jonah confronts the Ninevites (3:1–10). The two groups of foreigners are contrasted by the piety of the first group and the wickedness of the second, but in the face of an existential threat (death at sea by the sailors and death at YHWH's hand by the Ninevites), each group offers prayers and makes vows and sacrifices to Israel's deity. Thus, the non-Israelites in the story are lifted up as a positive example for Israel. Ehud Ben Zvi describes the tendency of the book to partially "Israelitize" them. He writes that "They are characterized as people who speak, behave and assume knowledge that is associated with 'pious Israelites'" (Ben Zvi 2003, 123). They contrast Jonah the anti-prophet who flees from YHWH and refuses to pray to YHWH his god (1:2, 6).

While elsewhere in the Latter Prophets prophetic oracles are prominent, in Jonah the interaction between the two main characters YHWH and Jonah drives the story. The word of YHWH comes to Jonah in both chapters 1 and 3, sending him to Nineveh. As Ben Zvi explains, on one hand, YHWH attempts to move Jonah toward acceptance of both the assignment and the deity's grace toward Nineveh. On the other hand, Jonah rejects YHWH's commission and inclusion of Nineveh in the divine economy to the degree that he would prefer to die than accept it (Ben Zvi 2003, 84). This sets up the verbal interactions between YHWH and Jonah in chapters 2 and 4. At issue is the character of YHWH in relationship to Israel. Jonah fled because he knew that the deity is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing" (4:2c).

Marvin Sweeney emphasizes the significance of YHWH's compassion for a postexilic audience grappling with the question of why YHWH allowed Nineveh/Assyria to survive when Assyria would later destroy Israel. Sweeney, like Ben Zvi, believes that Jonah is written to assure a suspicious Yehudite community that the mercy shown to Nineveh (p. 453) would be shown to Israel once more (Sweeney 2002, 307). Thus, the narrative and literary structures work together to weave a complex story of the relationship between YHWH and Jonah.

Jonah is largely regarded as a literary unity, but the inclusion of the psalm in 2:2–9 [Heb. 2:3–10] has perplexed commentators for generations. The psalm is diametrically different in tone, vocabulary, and message than the rest of the book. There is a marked difference between the defiant personality of Jonah in chapters 1, 3, and 4 and his thanksgiving psalm in chapter 2 (some scholars have argued that a psalm of lament would have been more genuine). For these reasons, a number of scholars regard the psalm as an interpolation, yet Aaron Schart suggests that, when read from the perspective of satire, the psalm is perfectly placed (Schart 2012, 114).

Other issues have been raised about the literary integrity of Jonah. Some scholars maintain that if 2:2–9 [Heb. 2:3–10] were to be removed, it would not diminish the book's integrity. In addition, divine names alternate throughout the book. In 1:1–3:3 the name YHWH appears. The names Elohim and ha-Elohim are used in chapter 3 in the interaction between Israel's deity and the Ninevites (3:5–10). In the interaction between God and Jonah in chapter 4, YHWH again is used (4:1–4), followed alternatively by YHWH Elohim (4:6), ha-Elohim (4:7), Elohim (4:8–9), and YHWH (4:10). While some scholars cite the divine names in Jonah as evidence that earlier fragments were skillfully combined to shape the book into its present form, others still argue for Jonah as a unified whole and insist that the story could not survive if any of its constituent components were removed.

Themes and Motifs

Several themes run throughout the book of Jonah. Since YHWH is the central character, YHWH's attributes as God over all creation, compassionate, and merciful are usually highlighted by interpreters (for a more detailed treatment of the theological views of God

in the book of Jonah, see Limburg 1993). Some argue that repentance—or more accurately YHWH's repentance—is central in the book. In chapter 3 the people respond to Jonah's message by praying to YHWH and turning/repenting (Heb *shub*) of their evildoings (3:8) in the hope that YHWH will relent/repent (Heb *nacham*) and turn/repent (*shub*) of YHWH's anger (3:9). YHWH responds by relenting/repenting (*nacham*) from the evil that YHWH was about to bring upon Nineveh (3:10). Different commentators argue that repentance, while prominent in chapter 3, is not a recurring theme; they focus instead on themes such as sin, forgiveness and compassion, divine judgment and mercy, and particularism and universalism (for different suggestions for the message of Jonah, see Simon 1999; R. B. Salters 1994; Roop 2002; Jenson 2008). In what follows, I trace other motifs noteworthy for their resonance and dissonance in interpretations among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities where Jonah is a significant figure.

(p. 454) Jonah the Fugitive Slave

The motif of Jonah as a runaway slave appears in the Qur'an. Jonah is the only prophet mentioned by name in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic account of the tale of Jonah is an abbreviated version of the biblical story with at least one significant variation. In the Qur'anic version, Jonah brings his message from God to his own people who reject it. Some Muslim interpretations refer to Jonah as a Ninevite. In anger he flees "like a runaway slave" (Qur'an 37:140) aboard the ship, believing that he has been absolved of his commission by his master (Mermer and Yazicioglu 2003), yet God stirred up a storm and the sailors tossed Jonah into the sea. According to another tradition, a fugitive slave on a ship was a bad omen, thus explaining the sailors' act of casting lots to determine whether there was a runaway on board. The lot fell on Jonah and they cast him overboard, whereupon he was swallowed by the fish, thus confirming his status as a fugitive slave who "did not trust his Master and escaped from the mission that his Master assigned to him" (Mermer and Yazicioglu 2003).

Jonah the runaway slave is a motif also explored by Ehud Ben Zvi. He maintains that the motif of the runaway servant/slave informed the reading of Jonah among the postexilic Yehudite literati (Ben Zvi 2003, 66). The book explicitly characterizes Jonah as a runaway. The narrator reports the secondhand account of the sailors that Jonah was fleeing from YHWH because he told them so (1:10; cf. 4:2). As a prophet of YHWH, the ancient readers would also have understood that Jonah was a "slave" or "servant of YHWH," and thus this community of readers would have been sympathetic with the master's right of return of the slave (Ben Zvi 2003, 69). The sailors' attempts to return Jonah to shore would have been read as their obligation to return him to his rightful master, even if that master is YHWH.

Jonah the Lying Prophet

According to *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (*The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, the Great*), Jonah attempted to flee from YHWH because he feared being rejected as a false prophet (Deut 18:21–22). He knew that his credibility was at risk if he preached destruction on Nineveh

because of YHWH's penchant for showing mercy and turning from destroying nations that repented. According to this legend, the first time YHWH sent Jonah to prophesy the restoration of the border of Israel, his words were fulfilled. When, however, YHWH sent Jonah a second time to prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem, YHWH had compassion for Jerusalem and repented from destroying it; thus, Jonah son of Amittai ("son of truth") earned the reputation of being a lying prophet (Friedlander 1916, 65–66). A more positive interpretation of his actions is that he knew that if the Ninevites repented it would put Israel in a bad light (Limburg 1993, 108). Nonetheless, if Ben Zvi's examination of the attributes assigned to fugitive slaves is correct and the ancient audience interpreted Jonah's behavior in light of the runaway slave motif, then his point that runaway (p. 455) slaves were "considered to be no good" and "unreliable" would support the false prophet evaluation of Jonah (Ben Zvi 2003, 70).

Jonah the Sinner

Jewish, Christian, and Muslim readers have seen Jonah's actions in the belly of the fish as reflecting the motif of sin and forgiveness. They share the view that Jonah sinned by disobeying YHWH's command to go to Nineveh but is forgiven when he prays to YHWH in the fish's belly (2:2–9 [Heb. 2:3–10]). Interpretations differ among the three religions, however. In one rabbinic tradition Jonah was overly cozy in the belly of the male fish, so YHWH sent a female fish that was pregnant with 365,000 baby fish to swallow Jonah so that the unbearable conditions in her womb would force him to pray to YHWH for deliverance. His prayer of thanksgiving includes the imagery of crying out from the belly of Sheol (2:2 [Heb. 2:3]), the "lowest circle of the universe, to which all the dead descend" (Simon 1999, 19). According to Uriel Simon, the supplicant Jonah does not view his deliverance as averting death but rather as a resurrection from death (Simon 1999, 19–20).

In the Qur'an, but for Jonah's sincere prayer of confession and contrition he would not have been delivered from the belly of the fish. Jonah, "man of the big fish," calls out from the deep darkness and professes that:

> "there is no deity save Thee! Limitless are Thee in Thy glory! Verily, I have done wrong." And so We responded unto him and delivered him from [his] distress: for thus do We deliver all who have faith. (Qur'an 21:87–88)[2]

God rescues Jonah from the fish and plunks him onto the shore. Jonah returns to deliver the message again and the people welcome it, thus saving them from impending doom.

The prayer of Jonah as it appears in the Qur'an is affirmation of the Divine Unity—the acknowledgment that nothing happens in creation apart from God's purpose. The prayer is in language similar to the Shahadah, the statement of faith that "there is no god except God." For this reason, the prophet Muhammad is said to have encouraged Muslims to invoke the prayer of Jonah in times of distress and God would respond.

For many Christian communities, Jonah's adventure in the watery depths and return to dry land symbolizes death and resurrection. For the gospel writer Matthew, Jonah's three days and nights in the fish's belly prefigured the period between the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (Mt 12:40). Luke regarded Jonah as a type of Christ (Lk 11:29–30): just as Jonah was a sign to Nineveh, Jesus was a sign to the people of his generation. Ben Zvi suggests that for some Christian interpretative communities the watery descent of Jonah is both associated symbolically with being born again (hence the reference to being in the belly of the fish and rebirth) and hints at the sacrament of baptism (Ben Zvi 2003, 139).

(p. 456) Contested Issues

Date

The book's date and genre are contested. The book's date is a conundrum because Jonah does not offer references found in other prophetic literature such as superscriptions with historical references, the site of the prophet's commissioning, or named political figures. The range of possibilities span from the eighth century to the late third century. Scholars who rely on 2 Kings as a point of reference assign a date to the period of the reign of Jeroboam II, which would place Jonah and perhaps the book in the eighth century (Stuart 1987; Ogilvie 1990). Challenging such a date is the fact that Nineveh only became the capital of Assyria under the reign of Sennacherib (705–781 BCE), which is after the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE and the lifetime of the prophet Jonah. Similarly, the phrase "king of Nineveh" in 3:7–9 is a misnomer, comparable to referring to the mayor of a city as king. This historical inaccuracy suggests that Jonah was written at a distance from the period depicted in the book.

A majority of scholars regard the book's composition as considerably later than the events it describes. They point first and foremost to language. Jonah includes words and motifs that are found only in postexilic biblical and nonbiblical Aramaic sources (for further discussion, see Wolff 1986). This includes, for example, seafaring words such as "mariner" (*mallah*) and "ship" (*sefina*) (1:5), "sailor" (*hovel*) (1:6), the phrase "on whose account?" (1:7, 12), and the ascription "God of heaven" (1:9; cf. Gen 24:7) which appear rarely in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 107 and Ezek 27) but are common in postexilic biblical and Imperial Aramaic sources. Hans Walter Wolff suggests that infrequency of certain vocabulary and phrases in Jonah can be accounted for by their limited use in specific contexts (Wolff 1986, 76), but the late biblical verbal constructions that are unique to Jonah support the argument that the book is postexilic.

Another argument for a late date is based on source criticism. According to some scholars, the theme of repentance found in Jonah is dependent on the theological sentiments expressed in the books of Jeremiah and Joel. Jonah's obstinacy suggests an awareness of Jeremiah's message of God's prerogative to be of a different mind concerning the destruction of a nation if it repents (Jer 18:7–8; cf. 26:3). While some commentators maintain that Jonah borrowed this theme of conditionality from Jeremiah, others (see, for example, Stu-

art 1987; Jenson 2008) argue that any similarities between Jonah and Jeremiah are more likely the result of concepts shared throughout the prophetic literature than the dependency of one book on another.

The argument that Jonah shares language and concepts with Joel is more persuasive. Jonah 3:9a and 4:2b (cf. Exod 34:6) are nearly identical to Joel 2:13b, 14a. Although some commentators have concluded that Jonah is dependent on Joel, the date of Joel itself is inconclusive. Determining a pre-exilic or postexilic date for Jonah seems to depend on the reader's theological or ideological beliefs about the historicity of Jonah.

(p. 457) Genre

The genre of Jonah almost defies classification, having been called a fable, legend, and fictional tale. Jonah contains elements of each—animals and inanimate objects as characters, a chief protagonist who may have been an historical figure but whose story has been embellished over time, and imaginative elements—all which convey moral teachings. Because Jonah also contains other features that lend themselves to other genres, however, the only general consensus is that Jonah is a narrative.

Just as modern literature has different types of narratives, so, too, Jonah has been assigned to various narrative categories. Scholars who consider Jonah a prophetic narrative point to the similarities between the story of Jonah and the narratives about the prophets Elijah and Elisha in 1 and 2 Kings. Those who maintain that Jonah should be regarded as a historical narrative to be read literally include Douglas Stuart, who categorizes Jonah as a didactic prophetic narrative or, more specifically, a "sensational, didactic, prophetic narrative" (Stuart 1987, 436). Without accepting the historicity of Jonah, James Limburg argues that the book might be described as a "fictional story developed around a historical figure for didactic purposes" and is thus a didactic story (Limburg 1993, 24).

Steven McKenzie argues that to read Jonah as history is to misunderstand its satirical intention for its ancient readers. In pointing out the book's anachronistic, nonsensical, exaggerated, and comical features, he insists that to engage the text as historical is to "misconstrue its primary message" (McKenzie 2005, 2). Other scholars agree that the book of Jonah contains a certain degree of irony, parody, and satire. Philip Jenson defines irony as the "implicit conflict between two different points of view" (Jenson 2008, 33). As such, Jenson calls Jonah's success in accomplishing the exact opposite of what he intended to as "paradigmatic" of this kind of irony.

One label given to the book of Jonah is that of parable. A parable has been defined by Johanna W. H. Bos as "a story which teaches an essential truth and demands from the listener a judgement" (Bos 1986, 74) and by R. B. Salters as "a fictitious narrative (usually something which might naturally occur) by which moral or spiritual relations are typically set forth" (Salters 1994, 46). Stuart adds that the parable features "elements of comparison to people or things outside the story who are the *real* (emphasis original) focus" (Stuart 1987, 436). As such, the parable usually turns the judgment of the story on

the listener. As helpful as these definitions are, they fail to elucidate which events or features of Jonah would lead a reader to regard it as a parable. Other commentators view Jonah as an allegory, asserting that the reported details in the book are meaningful only for their symbolic significance. Read allegorically, Jonah is representative of Israel, the fish represents alternatively Babylon, the exile, or Satan, and the Ninevites are the heathen Gentiles ripe for evangelization. While conservative commentators (such as Stuart 1987; Ogilvie 1990) would agree that Jonah shares features with both the parable and the allegory, they insist that Jonah should not be mistaken for either one since the former are both fictitious (and they claim Jonah is not).

(p. 458) Another possibility is that Jonah is a Midrash, a Jewish term for “exegesis” or “explanation” from the Hebrew verb *darash* for “to seek.” Hans Wolff defines a Midrash as “an investigation into something that is worth learning” (Wolff 1986, 82). Several scholars argue that the Midrash is Jonah’s most contemporaneous literary form, given that Midrashim are mentioned in 2 Chronicles (13:22; 24:27). From this perspective, the book of Jonah could be regarded as a commentary on 2 Kgs 14:25 and Jer 18:8. Because Jonah does not directly comment on these two passages, however, Wolff rejects this classification of Jonah and argues instead that it is a novella or short story.

In the end, whichever genre scholars assign to the book of Jonah appears to be a reflection of the scholar’s interpretative approach. For instance, scholars who believe that the story is fictional or unhistorical tend to classify Jonah as a fable, parable, satire, and so on. Those who read it as historically accurate or true refer to it as an historical narrative or allegory.

Issues of Gender

The book of Jonah arguably is exceptionally masculine. This is seen in its maritime setting and the lack of female characters (except for the Ninevites who may have included women and girls, even though the Hebrew word translated in the NRSV as “people” [3:5] is *enosh*, a collective masculine noun for “men” or “mankind”). The work of Lisa Norling, an expert in gender and maritime history, illuminates the masculine gendered world of seafaring life. She states that “Seafaring has traditionally for centuries, maybe for millennia, been one of the most rigidly and completely gender segregated of all forms of labor” (Norling 2012), and ships and the sea have been strictly male spaces. In Jonah, the Hebrew nouns for “mariner” and “sailor” are masculine, while the noun for “ship” is feminine (the maritime tradition of referring to ships as “she” goes back to ancient traditions). Norling points out, however, that the male gender of sailors did not preclude the presence of women aboard ships as cargo and passengers.

The lack of female characters and concerns, as well as English translations, obscures the subtle female imagery in the book. The use of both masculine (*dag*) and feminine (*dagah*) forms for the fish in 1:17–2:1 [Heb. 2:1–2] has led to some comical interpretations, such as the aforementioned Midrashic tradition about the male fish spitting Jonah into the belly of the female fish pregnant with 365,000 babies. Although less dramatically, several

commentators have suggested that Jonah's presence in the belly of the fish evokes images of pregnancy and birth or new creation (Trible 1994; Sweeney 2000; Ben Zvi 2003). In Hebrew, cities are gendered feminine, and the book of Nahum likens Nineveh to a prostitute (3:4–7). Although Nineveh's gender is absent as a literary device in Jonah, the descriptions of the city as "great" and "evil" (1:2, 3:1, 3, 10, 4:11) would perhaps conjure for its readers the image found in other prophetic literature of the city personified as a wanton woman threatened with violence. Despite the absence of female characters, Kelly Murphy argues that the book engages issues of concern in feminist discourse such as the relationship of justice to mercy (Murphy 2012, 321).

(p. 459) Final Thoughts

The book of Jonah is a masterly literary composition told in just forty-eight verses. The main character, Jonah, is a paradoxical figure who has been characterized as antiheroic, rebellious, recalcitrant, nationalistic, narrow-minded, judgmental, and a type, to name a few. We readers have been commanded by many a commentator or preacher to hold up a mirror to ourselves when engaging the book, which is perhaps why Joanna von Bos declared, "Jonah is everyone" (Bos 1986, 73). Even the Harlem Renaissance writer, folklorist, and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston was able to see Jonah through the personage of the male protagonist John Buddy Pearson in her debut novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934). The novel is a thinly veiled semi-autobiographical account of her parents' story. Hurston borrowed the book's title from Jonah 4:6–10, the passage of the gourd (KJV) and the worm, which serve as a metaphor for John's life that figuratively withers and dies on the vine when he repeatedly surrenders to his fleshly desires. Interestingly, the favorite Hebrew Bible scene in early Christian iconography was the image of Jonah sleeping naked beneath a gourd vine after having been spat out of the great fish (Narkiss 1979, 63). In contrast to Hurston's reading of this scene as representing death, Bezalel Narkiss finds that the artists' renditions were inspired by Jonah's death and miraculous emergence from the belly of the fish (Narkiss 1979, 64, 71). The meaning of the story varies depending on the reader's situatedness theologically, sociohistorically, culturally, and geographically, which is perhaps why the book of Jonah continues to have a multitude of afterlives.

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Notes:

([1.]) These two Greek codices place the Twelve before Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

([2.]) The “We” in the Qur’an 21:87–88 are the angels who interceded for Jonah before God. For commentary on the Qur’an, see the compendium of Muslim exegesis and history in Perlmann (1988).

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Micah

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Abstract and Keywords

The essay discusses key issues in current interpretation of the book of Micah. The structure of the book is dominated by the change between doom and hope, which leads to different proposals for the division into sections and to various descriptions of the book's coherence. There is a consensus that the book has a long history of formation with the Persian (or even Hellenistic) period as its last stage. However, it is contested whether it was formed in these days or only finalized after a longer history of tradition. Among the key themes of the book, the essay distinguishes between foreground themes (judgment and hope, social critique and ethics, Israel and the nations) and modern questions posed of this ancient text (Micah and gender and Micah as trauma literature).

Keywords: Micah, doom and hope, social critique, ethics, gender, trauma, Persian period

IN the Hebrew tradition, the prophetic book ascribed to Micah stands in the middle of the Book of the Twelve. The central verse of the Twelve is Mic 3:12, the announcement of the destruction of Zion. It is followed by an oracle of brightest hope, namely the vision of Mount Zion as the central place where the nations will receive Torah from YHWH (4:1). Abrupt changes between sections of doom and sections of hope are characteristic for the book of Micah. Every discussion of the book's structure has to start at this point.

Structure

Dividing the Book in Sections

Many proposals have been made to describe the structure of Micah. The change between doom and hope leads many authors to a threefold division. Andersen and Freedman call them the book of doom (1:2–3:12), the book of visions (4:1–5:15 [Heb. 4:1–5:14]), and the book of contention and conciliation (6:1–7:20) (2000, 7). The main argument in favor of this division is the content of the oracles. There is a clear flow from 1:2 to 3:12. These chapters display a tight compositional structure in which the noun *raʿ(ah)*, denoting both

evil done and the resulting disaster, plays a leading role. The fate of Samaria and that of Jerusalem are described in similar words (1:6: “I will make Samaria a heap in the open country,” and 3:12: “Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins”; unless otherwise noted, translations are from the NRSV). Micah 1:10–16 laments a “disaster from Yahweh” that comes down “to the gate of Jerusalem” (1:12). Chapters 2 and 3 explain why this disaster is coming, namely due to the rapacity of the rich and the lacerating exercise of power by the rulers. The whole composition ends in 3:12 with the announcement of the devastation of Zion. This section is followed by chapters 4 and 5, which form a close composition. Chapters 6 and 7 lead from new accusations to the final hope and can be (p. 462) seen as a unit. They can also be separated into a section of doom (6:1–7:6) and one of hope (7:7–20), so that the whole book would embrace four sections.[1]

Others argue for a threefold division dominated by the summons in 1:2, 3:1, and 6:1 (Willis 1969, 5–42; Smith 1984, 8). Every unit leads from doom to hope: doom in 1:2–2:11 and hope in 2:12–13; doom in chapter 3 and hope in chapters 4 and 5; and doom in 6:1–7:6 and hope in 7:7–20. Another composition marker is the connection between 1:2 and 5:15 [Heb. 5:14]. In 1:2, the peoples are summoned to “hear”; Micah 5:15 [Heb. 5:14] threatens those nations “that did not obey” (in Hebrew the same word). This results in a twofold composition of the book as a whole, chapters 1–5 and 6–7 (Hagstrom 1988).

Closer attention reveals details that overstep the proposed divisions. Micah 2:12–13 and 4:6–7 form an *inclusio* around 3:1–4:5, both texts portraying YHWH as the king who will gather and assemble the dispersed and using the same Hebrew word for “survivors” or “remnant.” A time structure also delineates units of the book. Three units are introduced by “on that day” (2:4; 4:6; and 5:10 [Heb. 5:9]). Together with the phrase “in days to come” (4:1) and the threefold “now” in 4:9, 11, and 5:1 [Heb.4:14]), they form a system covering at least chapters 1–5.

There are good arguments for every proposal concerning the structure of the book, be it twofold, threefold, or fourfold, each with variations in itself. One need not discuss them as strict alternatives. Indeed, “there is no definitive way to outline the book” (Smith 1984, 8 n. 4). Like in a piece of music, it is possible to hear different voices at the same time. In chapters 1–3, a voice of lament is dominant, but it is interrupted in 2:12–13 by another voice that is hopeful. Micah 2:12–13 introduces a theme that is taken up again in 4:6–7. Between 3:12 and 4:1 one finds something like a general pause. Micah 6:9–15 with its accusations against the rich in some way sounds like a reprise of the denouncements in chapter 2.

The Quest for the Coherence of the Book

The 1980s are the starting point of a series of publications that focus on the coherence of the book of Micah. David Hagstrom (1988) is primarily concerned with what he terms “literary coherence.” He finds a two-part structure of the final form: chapters 1–5 and 6–7. Decisive for him are the two summons in 1:2 and 6:1, each followed by a second summons in 3:1 and 6:9. The two units bring into focus a trial setting in which YHWH accuses

Israel of sin. Hagstrom concludes that “Micah 1–5 and 6–7 are not simply two juxtaposed, but functionally independent units. Rather, they correspond with respect to structure; they display similar terminology; they interlock by virtue of common motifs and other linking correspondences; and they function together theologically” (1988, 124).

Like Hagstrom’s book, Cuffey’s study of *The Literary Coherence of the Book of Micah* (2015) was written in the 1980s, though it was not published before 2015. Like Hagstrom, Cuffey’s focus is on literary devices, yet what constitutes the unity of the book are not literary forms but a theological concept. According to Cuffey, it is the motif of the rem (p. 463) nant, which is present in four texts (2:12–13, 4:1–8, 5:7-9 [Heb. 5:6–8], and 7:18–20), that holds the book together.

What Hagstrom criticizes (and Cuffey practices), namely the search for concepts as unifying elements, forms the center of two studies published in 2001. The title of the book of Mignon Jacobs (2001) already indicates her approach: *The Conceptual Coherence of the Book of Micah*. Jan Wagenaar (2001) also finds two concepts that hold the composition together, although he speaks of composition and redaction in the title of his book (*Judgement and Salvation: The Composition and Redaction of Micah 2–5*). Jacobs declares “judgment” and “hope” as the two main concepts. For Wagenaar, it is “judgement” and “salvation,” the order making no difference to their treatments. Despite their similar results, the approach of the two authors is very different from each other. For Wagenaar, “the alternation between the oracles of doom and the oracles of hope in the Book of Micah is the result of a long literary history” (Wagenaar 2001, 27). Whereas Wagenaar never comes to the final text of Micah (he restricts his analysis to chaps. 2–5), Jacobs starts with the final form: the aim of her study “is the conceptual coherence of the final form” (Jacobs 2001, 97). In spite of their opposed starting points, the two come to the same result: the unifying concept of the book is “judgment and hope.” It is evident that the book of Micah contains both, judgment and salvation. The question, however, is whether this is exclusive for the book of Micah. The two concepts are so general that they can be found in nearly every prophetical book of the Bible.

Evaluating the competing approaches and results, one should admit that a book like that of Micah has structures that overlay each other, producing different coherences on the respective levels. They are still visible in the final form of the text. The search for the one and only concept of the book leads to a level that is too general to be significant for a special book. It is thus not possible to speak about the coherence of the book without speaking about its formation.

The Formation of the Book

Possible Layers within the Book

The different proposals for describing the structure and the difficulties in defining coherence emerge from the history of the formation of the book. The majority agrees that it

was not written by one author but has a history of formation, perhaps from the eighth century BCE up until the times of Hellenism. Like an old cathedral, the book of Micah openly presents traces of its history of composition.

There is a general consensus that the heading in 1:1 is an addition, with Sweeney deeming it “a third person archival or reporting statement” (2000, 343 n. iii). Since the time of Bernhard Stade (Stade 1881), many scholars have judged chapters 1–3 to be the nucleus of the book’s composition, but they disagree on three issues. The first is the exact extent of the oldest text. It is evident that the hopeful verses in 2:12–13 are not part of the (p. 464) original composition, and 2:4–5 are also likely a later addition. Some see the beginning of the oldest text in 1:2; for others, in 1:10. The second item of dispute is the authorship. According to Stade, the oldest text goes back to Micah himself. Others think that followers or disciples of the prophet formed this text using the first person as a literary device (Kessler 2000, 94–97). The third issue that is contested is the question whether additional texts beyond chapters 1–3 go back to Micah or his immediate followers and disciples.

It should be mentioned that in European, especially German, scholarship there is a trend to further reduce the nucleus of the tradition that goes back to the prophet himself. According to Björn Corzilius, only a few verses can be traced back to Micah. He finds the nucleus of the book in Mic 1:11–15. Even in these few verses, he deletes five lines, leaving a “poem on towns in the Shephelah” consisting of six lines (reconstruction of this text on 2016, 130). It is difficult to imagine how such a short text without any context or theological meaning, which could have “found sufficient place on an ostracon” (Corzilius 2016, 148), should have survived in royal archives for one and a half centuries to then become the nucleus of a prophetic book of seven chapters full of an elaborate theology. Here, we are confronted with an extreme position. At the other end of the scale, we find an author like Bruce Waltke, who holds “that Micah had a hand in editing the unified book traditionally assigned to him” (Waltke 2007, 13).

The majority of scholars understand chapters 4 and 5 as younger than chapters 1–3. The composition in 4:9-5:4 [Heb. 4:9–5:3], bound together by a threefold “now” (4:9, 11; 5:1 [Heb.4:14]), already speaks of the deportation to Babylon and alludes to the end of the Judean kingdom (5:1 [Heb. 4:14]). At the same time, it shifts from the catastrophe to new hope: “There (in Babylon) you shall be rescued” (4:10); “I will make your horn iron and your hoofs bronze” (4:13); “from you (Bethlehem) shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel” (5:2 [Heb. 5:1.]). Whereas this composition may date to the Babylonian epoch, the vision of the nations’ pilgrimage to Mount Zion (4:1–5) reflects the Persian ideology of the peoples coming to the King, hewn in stone in the Persepolis reliefs.

The character of chapters 6 and 7 is the most contested of the book. Micah 7:7–20 is generally judged as a late text, possibly the latest of the whole book. For the three units in 6:1–8, 6:9–15, and 7:1–6, three main positions should be named. For some, the voice of the prophet is again to be heard here. Others judge the text as a *Fortschreibung* (revision) of the older text in chapters 1–3 (or chaps. 1–5), which comes from postexilic times.

A third position thinks of this text as totally independent from the rest of the book. According to this position, it can even be ascribed to a Deutero-Micah or "Micah from Samaria," who originally has nothing to do with Proto-Micah (van der Woude 1985, 193; Strydom 1993).

The Composition of the Final Form

With the exception of those who assign the whole book to the eighth century, a vast majority of scholars consent that the final form of the book was composed either in the (p. 465) exilic period or in the epoch of the Persian empire. In spite of this broad consensus, there is dissent on the issue of what is meant by "composed in the Persian period."

The more traditional view is formulated, for example, by William McKane: "My premise is that only Micah 1–3 (except 2:12–13) is to be assigned to the eighth-century prophet Micah, that the book of Micah bridges the centuries and that its history spans the pre-exilic, the exilic, and the post-exilic periods" (McKane 1998, 7). In this understanding, "composed in the Persian period" is identical with "finalized in the Persian period."

This view is challenged by authors like Ehud Ben Zvi and Julia O'Brien. O'Brien summarizes Ben Zvi's position in the following words: "Ehud Ben Zvi places the composition of Micah as well as other prophetic books squarely in the Persian period. Without denying the possibility that the Persian period scribes had some source material at their disposal, he nonetheless views the Persian period writer of Micah as actually composing the book rather than just supplementing it" (O'Brien 2015, xlv; cf. Ben Zvi 2000, 9–11). The book should be read "within the exilic or postexilic context of its final form" (O'Brien 2015, xlv, heading).

To dissolve the dissent, I propose making a strict distinction between the question of literary tradition and composition, on the one hand, and reading strategies, on the other. O'Brien rightly criticizes that the traditional approaches "prioritize the eighth-century context of the book and appeal to Assyrian period information for background materials." She is still right when she states: "Interpreting Micah only in its eighth-century context… requires us to ignore the actual book before us" (O'Brien 2015, xliv). Such claims, however, are matters of the strategy of reading. To "prioritize" a certain reading and to interpret "only" in a certain context are decisions made by the reader or interpreter. They have nothing to do with the historical-critical question of how the book came into its final form.

The question of the composition of the book—whether it was supplemented and finalized or whether it was composed with possibly some source material at hand, both in the Persian period—as an historical question should be distinguished from the hermeneutical question of how to read the book. Historically spoken, the information that the scribes may have had "some source material at their disposal" is rather vague. What character did this material have? Was it an ostracon, as Corzilius thinks? Or was it something like a "memoir" of Micah's followers and disciples to keep in mind the prophet's message for the generations to come? (Kessler 2000, 94–97 n. xii). Could this text not be a first form of

a “book of Micah,” supplemented later and finalized in the Persian period? What did the author of Jer 26:17–19 have in mind when he or she let the elders of the land quote Mic 3:12? Was it an oral tradition or already a written text, a rudimentary “book of Micah”?

Posing the question is not yet giving the answer. What I believe to be crucial is not to mingle the historical-critical and the hermeneutical question. Hermeneutically seen, reading Micah only in its eighth-century context would indeed mean to ignore the book of Micah as we find it in the canon of the prophets. We therefore now turn to the themes of the book, which are clearly the themes of its final form.

(p. 466) The Themes of the Book of Micah

The plural form “themes” in this heading is used deliberately. The book of Micah displays a variety of themes. Some foreground themes appear at the surface of the text. Others are background themes which do not appear at first glance but are introduced by modern readers. The latter do not intrude into the text in an artificial manner but find their echo within the text when provoked by modern questions.

Foreground Themes

The following three themes are closely connected with each other. The first, judgment and hope, is the overall theme that is specified by the theme of social critique and ethics, on the one hand, and that of the nations, on the other.

Judgment and Hope

“The most prominent theme in Micah is judgment,” Ralph Smith declares (1984, 10 n. iv). This statement may be the consequence of “interpreting Micah only in its eighth-century context” (O’Brien 2015, xliv n. xvii). Reading the book as it stands, one must conclude with Mignon Jacobs that “judgment or hope” are not alternatives but that both together form the most prominent theme of the book (Jacobs 2001, 222 n. viii).

YHWH’s judgment is directed against the two capitals of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The fact that the foundations of Samaria, the capital of the northern state of Israel, shall be uncovered (1:6) means that the city has come to an end for all times. This is contrary to the historical development of Samaria, which was rebuilt soon after its destruction; it is a theological concept. Samaria will never again be mentioned in the Twelve. Though the judgment against Jerusalem is formulated in similar words (3:12), it is not definitive. After the general pause between 3:12 and 4:1, we can perceive Zion as the highest of the mountains and Jerusalem as the center of the world.

Samaria and Jerusalem are collective entities, but they are not monolithic. Within the collective entity of Jerusalem or Judah, a differentiation is made between perpetrators and their victims. Judgment is directed against the perpetrators according to the law of retaliation. Those who take fields and houses from the small farmers “will have no one to cast the line by lot” when the land will be redistributed in the future (2:1–5). The leaders of Ju-

dah who do not know justice shall get no answer from YHWH when they will be in distress (3:1–4). The prophets “who lead my people astray” will have no revelations in the future and shall be put to shame (3:5–7).

The prophet, however, knows that a clear distinction between culprits and the rest of the population is not always possible. The destruction of Jerusalem will touch both the perpetrators and their victims. That is why Micah introduces his final threat against Jerusalem with the words: “Therefore *because of you* (the rulers, priests, and prophets of 3:11) Zion shall be ploughed as a field” (3:12).

(p. 467) The judgment is caused by transgression and sin (1:5). In the case of Samaria, only a few hints are given to identify the sin; perhaps the readers of the book of Micah are presumed to have gathered this information by reading the previous books of Hosea and Amos. In the case of Jerusalem, the transgressions of the rich and the rulers lead to catastrophe for all. Micah 6:9–15 and 7:1–6 again attack the wealthy and powerful, but the corruption is no longer only one between the powerful and their victims. It entered the heart of the families: one should not trust friends and even not the one “who lies in your embrace”; son and father, daughter and mother, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law are against each other (7:5–6).

Hope is only possible after repentance. The confession of sin immediately follows: “I have sinned against him” (7:9). This confession opens the door to a hopeful future. Hope is well-grounded in God’s characterization as pardoning iniquity, passing over the transgression, not retaining his anger forever, but ready to show compassion and clemency (7:18–20). The author of these verses clearly relies on YHWH’s self-presentation in Exod 34:6–7.

Social Critique and Ethics

A main theme of the book of Micah is social critique. Those who have caused Jerusalem’s destruction (“because of you,” 3:12) are the wealthy landowners who seize fields and houses (2:2) and finally drive out women and children (2:9). They do this “because it is in their power.” The next chapter moves from the rich landowners to the political rulers and their ideologues the prophets. The powerful are accused of “hating the good and loving the evil,” of committing acts of cannibalism (3:2), and of building Jerusalem on the blood of forced labor (3:10). The ideologues are charged with proclaiming that “no harm shall come upon us” (3:11).

Chapters 6 and 7 continue with social critique. Micah 6:9–15 moves from the countryside, the milieu of chapter 2, to a more urban context. The sometimes difficult text speaks of “the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked,” of “scant measure,” “wicked scales,” and “a bag of dishonest weights.” As in the sequence from chapter 2 to 3, the sequence of 7:1–6 following 6:9–15 moves from the socioeconomic to the political and administrative context. The text accuses the official and the judge who ask for a bribe, the powerful who dictate what they desire and pervert justice (7:3–4).

Micah's analysis of the social and political situation and his criticism of the rich and powerful are hardly weaker than what Amos utters. These critiques probably are grounded in developments that took place in the late monarchic period, but exploitation of the poor by means of debt, fraud in business affairs, corruption, and misuse of power continued in the Persian period when the book was completed and finalized; the social evils were indeed ongoing.

What would be a positive ethical behavior in the eyes of the book? This question is discussed in 6:1–8. The text presents a controversy of YHWH with his people. YHWH asks: "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!" The reaction of the addressees is a mere exaggeration. The people ask whether they should offer "thousands of rams," "tens of thousands of rivers of oil," or even their firstborn. (p. 468) YHWH's answer contains what John Barton has named an "ethical digest" (Barton 2014, chap. 9): "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does YHWH require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Though, in the context, these words are directed to Israelites asking how they can please YHWH, they are addressed to all humans ("mortals," in Hebrew: *adam*). Micah does not limit criticism.The book offers ethical principles as orientation for Israel and all humans (on 6:6–8, see Kessler 2017, 425–428). Though Mic 6:8 speaks of humankind in a universalistic perspective, the book in its entirety well presupposes the fundamental difference between Israel and the nations.

Israel and the Nations

The fate of the nations is the third of the foreground themes to be mentioned. It runs throughout the book from beginning to end. As with Samaria and Judah, judgment is also directed against the nations. The text of Micah begins with YHWH's call to the nations to listen (1:2). Those who come to Mount Zion to seek instruction (*torah*) and the word of YHWH shall have a bright and peaceful future (4:1–5). On those, however, who do not listen, YHWH "in anger and wrath will execute vengeance" (5:15 [Heb. 5:14]). In 5:7–8 [Heb. 5:6–7], the fate of the people is connected to their attitude against "the remnant of Jacob." Israel can be "like dew" for them, "like showers on the grass," but it can also be "like a young lion among the flocks of sheep." Toward the end of the book, the nations are mentioned one last time. They shall "be ashamed of all their might" but also "turn in dread to YHWH our God" (7:16–17). It is evident that the fate of the nations is not only judgment but both judgment and hope, depending on their attitude toward the people of God.

This perspective is highlighted by the central pericope of the book, namely 4:1–5. The vision of Mount Zion as the objective of the nations' pilgrimage is placed "in the last days" (KJV), "in days to come" (NRSV), "in the latter days" (Smith 1984, 36 n. iv; Waltke 2007, 191 n. xiv), or "in later/future days" (Sweeney 2000, 376 n. iii). The eschatological overtones of the pericope must not be misunderstood in the sense of Christian eschatology, which speaks of a world after or beyond this world. While the announcements of chapters 1–3 concern the imminent future, 4:1–5 concerns the remote future. In the days to come, the nations shall stream to the temple on Mount Zion. There, they will learn

from God’s Torah and from his word how to live in peace with each other. The nations shall go home and “beat their swords into ploughshares” (probably the most popular phrase of the whole book of Micah).

The instruction that the people receive does not mean their conversion to Judaism. At least, the question is left open. The text says that the God of Israel will judge and arbitrate the nations but not that he will convert them, even not in the latter days. In the present, “all the people walk, each in the name of its god” (v. 5). For Israel, the “we” who speaks, the only thing that is important is that “we will walk in the name of YHWH our God for ever and ever.” Micah 4:1–5 comes very close to 6:8. The “mortals” (*adam*) are able to know what God requires from them, and the nations can get instruction from God. The nations do not become Israel, however; Israel is still God’s chosen people.

(p. 469) Modern Questions to an Old Text

Judgment and hope, social critique and ethics, as well as Israel and the nations are themes that appear at the surface of the text. The following two themes, gender and trauma, are induced by modern questions. Julia O’Brien speaks of “reading with a gender-critical lens” (O’Brien 2015, xli, xvii). It is obvious that the questions one poses as well as the answers that one gets depend on the lens with which one reads. The themes of the following section do not depend on an author-focused interpretation but on a certain reading strategy.

Micah and Gender

In the book of Micah, the theme of gender is present on different levels. One level is that of social injustice. The perpetrators clearly are male. The nouns for heads, chiefs, and rulers (3:1, 9), for prophets, rulers, and priests (3:5, 11), for the wealthy (6:12), and for the official, the judge, and the powerful (7:3) are masculine in form. Also, the participles or verbs in masculine form (“those who devise wickedness,” 2:1; “you drive out,” 2:9) hint at male culprits. Their victims are often called “my people” (2:8, 9; 3:2, 3, 5), which could be understood as inclusive. In chapter 2, the text distinguishes between the male (“they do violence to a man and his house, a man and his inheritance,” 2:2 [translation Smith 1984, 23 n. iv]) and the female victims (“the women of my people you drive out from their pleasant houses,” 2:9). Even children are mentioned as victims (2:9).

The text seems to be sensible to the fact that the victims of social and economic violence always comprise male, female, and children. Those focusing on gender, however, do more “than simply pose the question, ‘What did/does Micah say about women?’” (O’Brien 2015, xl n. xvii).

It is interesting to note that one woman appears in an historical context, Miriam. Micah 6:4 is the only text in the Hebrew Bible that singles out Moses, Aaron, and Miriam for their leadership of the Exodus. Whereas in the Pentateuch Moses dominates everything, Aaron is clearly subordinate to him, and Miriam is altogether marginalized, Mic 6:4 stresses the equal rank of the three. In the Persian period, Moses probably stands for the

Torah, Aaron is the representative of priesthood, and Miriam is the prophetess (cf. Exod 15:20). It is worth mentioning that a female figure represents one of the forms of contact between the divine and humans (Kessler 2001).

The third level on which the theme of gender is present in the book is that of metaphor. Samaria is personified as a woman and compared to a prostitute (1:6–7). The cities listed in 1:10–15 mostly are feminine; the lament ends in v. 16 with a call to make oneself bald and to cut one's hair. As the imperatives are in feminine singular, it is probably the "daughter Zion" (v. 13) who is addressed. "Daughter Zion" explicitly is mentioned in 4:8, 10, and 13, where she is portrayed as a woman in labor (v. 10). Whereas being in labor is an expression of anguish here, being in labor and bringing forth symbolize hope in 5:3 [Heb.5:2]. "Daughter Jerusalem" appears in 4:8. "Zion" and "Jerusalem" in 3:11–12 are used with feminine forms. Other personifications are clearly masculine, especially "Jacob" and "Israel."

(p. 470) The assessment of this imagery is disputed. Sophia Bietenhard finds images based on everyday experience of women that are well integrated into theological reflection (2001). Judy Fentress-Williams states that "[t]he violent imagery and language directed against the metaphorical female entity of city or nation has been used to encourage and condone violence against real women" (Fentress-Williams, 2012, 327). Julia O'Brien stresses the ambiguity of language and imagery. The metaphors of the book can be found generative of hope, but they can also constrain thought and action (O'Brien 2015, lix–lxi n. xvii). The wide range of opinions clearly demonstrates that the answers to our questions highly depend on the experiences and convictions of the readers of different times and places.

Trauma Studies

A relatively new field of study in the interpretation of biblical texts is the discourse of trauma. From the eighth century BCE on, Israel experienced the violence of imperial powers. Prophetic literature contains the reflections of those who survived wars and exile and their subsequent trauma. Reading the texts through the lens of trauma theory, one can identify the ongoing effects of the trauma but also the skills that can facilitate survival and recovery.

Alphonso Groenewald presents a reading of Mic 4:1–5 as an example of this new discourse. The pericope immediately follows 3:12, a text that "arouses pictures of chaos and trauma" from the perspective of the readers of the text. Read against the background of 3:12, Mic 4:1–5 becomes "an agrarian anti-war protest," or "a voice of protest against the trauma caused by the politics of the governing elite of Jerusalem" (Groenewald 2018, 363–364).

New reading strategies like gender or trauma can be linked. This is demonstrated by Juliana Claassens. She interprets the image of the woman in labor, already mentioned earlier in the context of gender, within the trauma discourse. In Mic 4:9, the metaphor "captured Judah's panic and fear in the face of overwhelming military invasion." Already in

the next verse, “the woman who finds herself in labor emerges as a warrior”; the change gives empowerment to the woman. Only a few verses later, “a woman is said to successfully give birth to a child” (5:3 [Heb. 5:2]). Claassens names this a “creative act of reframing” (Claassens 2018, 228–229). Interpreting the texts in the light of trauma theory helps modern readers to better understand the old texts.

Gender studies and trauma theory are not new methods of interpretation. They are a new lens for reading the texts. The combination of historical-critical research, literary studies, author-focused studies of the themes of Micah, and reader-oriented new readings will always generate new and surprising insights to an old text.

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Notes:

([1.]) Cf. Wolff (1990). A different fourfold division is proposed by Sweeney (2000, 342f). He delineates 1:2–16; 2:1–5:15 (Heb. 2:1–5:14; 6:1–16; and 7:1–20).

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Nahum

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay introduces readers to the key interpretive issues in the critical study of the book of Nahum. Interpreting Nahum today requires understanding the following four topics: Nahum's superscription; the purported acrostic in Nah 1; Nahum within the Book of the Twelve; and divine sexual violence in Nahum. Readers have been troubled by Nahum's depiction of God's vengeance toward Assyria, yet they have also been attracted to the book's aesthetic qualities. The history of interpretation of Nahum reveals that the changing demographics of readers has dramatically shifted the foci of interpretation and attitudes toward the text. Because of its juxtapositions, Nahum continues to be a challenging text that oftentimes divides readers rather than unites them.

Keywords: Nahum, Habakkuk, Jonah, Nineveh, Assyria, vengeance, acrostic, sexual violence, feminist, history of interpretation

(p. 473) WHILE theologians have not dwelt much upon this three-chapter prophetic book solely comprised of judgment speeches against a foreign nation, Nahum has received an inordinate amount of attention by biblical scholars who are fascinated by its brilliant aesthetics but repulsed by its disturbing contents. The challenge to make sense of this juxtaposition of the beautiful and horrible has pressed the limits of hermeneutical and theological methods and inspired scholars to propose a wide range of creative solutions.

The critical study of Nahum provides a window into the nature and state of biblical scholarship, and its results shine a light on the values and priorities of its practitioners. Because one's interpretation of Nahum may reveal more about the reader than the text itself, this essay will focus not only on the contents of Nahum but also on the various readings scholars have proposed for the book. Instead of a traditional survey, it explores four key topics for the understanding of the book: (1) Nahum's superscription; (2) the purported acrostic in Nahum 1; (3) Nahum within the Book of the Twelve; and (4) divine sexual violence in Nahum. These topics engage the key interpretive issues and the diverse con-

tents of the book, and their understanding provides readers a helpful introduction to the reading of Nahum.

The Superscription as a Hermeneutical Key

The book of Nahum is the seventh book in the Twelve Minor Prophets in both the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint. The book is comprised solely of judgment speeches against the city of Nineveh, known to be the capital of the Assyrian empire at the height of its power. Nothing is known of the prophet Nahum (*naḥum*, "comfort"), and his city of origin, Elkosh, has not been located. The same root for the name Nahum appears in the names Nehemiah, Nahamani (Neh 7:7), Tanhumeth (Jer 40:8), and Menahem (2 Kgs (p. 474) 15:12–23), and it appears frequently as a personal name on NW Semitic seals and seal impressions in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE (Cathcart 1992, 998–1000). Given that the book is a scribal product and since other superscriptions in the Twelve may not contain the proper name of a prophet (e.g., Mal 1:1; "my messenger" 3:1), it is possible that Nahum of Elkosh is a pseudonym. Some scholars have suggested that "Elkosh" might be read as the conflation of *'el* ("God") and *qasha* ("severe"). Read this way, a parallel to Nah 1:1 can be found in Isa 21:1–2, where an oracle (*massa*) announces a harsh vision (*hazut qasha*). The mention of a severe God (*el qasha*) in Nah 1:1 would find its parallel in the announcement of a jealous God (*el qano*) in the verse that follows.

While entitling a work that solely announces God's vengeance as a book of comfort may seem "ironic or even nonsensical" (O'Brien 2002, 32) to modern scholars, the author of Nahum may not have considered it so. It is clear Isaiah served as a literary influence upon Nahum, as evidenced in the quotation of Isa 52:7 in Nah 2:1. The most violent and horrifying judgment scene in Isaiah deemed a "day of vengeance (*naqam*)" (Isa 34:8) is paired with Isaiah's quintessential oracle of salvation that announces, "Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance (*naqam*), with terrible recompense. He will come and save you'" (Isa 35:4). In Isaiah, both judgment and salvation qualify as acts of God's *naqam*. Scholars have argued that the contrasting chapters of judgment and salvation in Isa 34–35 ought to be read as a diptych and function as the centerpiece of book of Isaiah (Matthews 1995). Just as Isa 34–35 announces oracles of judgment and salvation for the sake of the city of Zion (Isa 34:8; Isa 35:10), so, too, Nahum's message of vengeance and comfort will concern a city, Nineveh. Gregory Cook suggests Nah 1:1–2, with its reference to *naḥum* in 1:1 and its three references to God as "avenging" (*noqem*) in 1:2, is drawn from Isa 1:24, "Thus, the utterance of the LORD YHWH of hosts, The mighty one of Israel. Ah, I will be comforted (*ennaḥem*) from my adversaries. And will avenge myself (*we'innqma*) on my enemies" (Cook 2016b, 38, translation his). Viewed in this manner, the superscription serves as a hermeneutical key for readers to interpret Nahum's message of vengeance as a word of comfort.

The superscription of the book identifies the prophecy as an "oracle" (*massa*) of Nineveh. *Massa* is sometimes translated as "burden" since it is a derivative of root *ns'* ("to lift up").

Jeremiah 23:33–40 employs puns on *massa* and *ns'* to describe how the prophet's "oracle" declares Israel is a "burden" to God and will therefore be "lifted up" in judgment. The use of "oracle" in Nah 1:1 follows the pattern in First Isaiah introducing oracles of judgment lifted up against foreign cities or nations (Isa 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 23:1). Elsewhere in the Twelve, *massa* introduces prophecies in Hab 1:1; Zech 9:1; 12:1; and Mal 1:1. Michael Floyd argues that the term functions as a genre marker to introduce a prophetic text with the following qualities: (1) it is an assertion about Yahweh's involvement in particular historical events; (2) this assertion clarifies a previous assertion Yahweh made; and (3) this assertion provides insight in how to respond to Yahweh's actions in the present or future (Floyd 2002).

Nahum 1:1 also introduces the text as a "book of the vision" (*seper ḥazon*) of Nahum. Edgar Conrad argues that a "vision" (*ḥazon*) is a semiotic code designating a prophetic (p. 475) book written for later audiences (Conrad 2003). If these terms serve as genre designations, one wonders whether Nahum is an "oracle" or a "vision," or if it is mixed genre. Most likely these terms do not signify strict categorical distinctions and instead possess a level of semantic fluidity. Nahum is the only prophetic book whose superscription designates it a *seper*. While this word does not specify the exact nature of the written document, it nonetheless reinforces the notion that this prophecy ought to be understood primarily as the literary production of religious scribes rather than the oral performance of preachers.

The Purported Acrostic of Nahum 1

Commentators on Nahum have often cited the observations of Bishop Robert Lowth, the first to study biblical literature as poetry, that "Out of all the Minor Prophets, none seem to equal the sublimity, the passion, and bold spirit of Nahum (Lowth 1770, 274, translation mine). Roughly two and a half centuries later this admiration for Nahum's artistry reappears in Christensen's glowing comments, "The scribal craftsmanship displayed in the book of Nahum is a tour de force, unsurpassed elsewhere in the whole of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)" (Christensen 2009, 176).

While the book employs a variety of poetic devices, none has drawn as much attention and scrutiny than a purported alphabetic, and for some telestic, acrostic in Nah 1. Franz Delitzsch, in the second edition of his commentary on Ps 9, mentions that the sequence of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet influences the prophet's thought in Nah 1:3–7 and credited this insight to the Lutheran pastor G. Frohnmeyer (Delitzsch 1867, 107). Every proposal for an alphabetic acrostic, however, has required significant emendation of the text. Gustav Bickell was the first to propose that an acrostic of the entire Hebrew alphabet appears in Nah 1:2–10 (Bickell 1880), yet he revised his initial acrostic several times due to criticism and alternative proposals. As scholars continued to propose revisions, the scale and scope of the acrostic along with the necessary emendations were reduced. Despite the lack of scholarly consensus, the acrostic became "canonized" with the publication of the *Biblia Hebraica*. In the second and third editions of *BHK* the editors indicated

that the acrostic consisted of the letters *aleph* through *samek*, but in *BHS*, K. Elliger did not extend the acrostic further than the letter *kap*, and the view that a partial acrostic exists in Nah1:2–8, consisting of lines beginning with *aleph* through *kap*, became the scholarly consensus by the late twentieth century. The majority of commentaries continue to uphold this interpretation with variation, as evidenced in Spronk's proposal that Nah 1:1–3 forms the acrostic and telestic *'ny yhwh* ("I am YHWH") (Spronk 1998).

In the last several decades a number of scholars have increasingly voiced their skepticism regarding the existence of a such an acrostic. Michael Floyd argues that the legion and variance in textual reconstructions, the illegitimacy of an incomplete acrostic, and the genre classification of Nah 1:2–10 as a prophetic interrogation ought to end the (p. 476) debate (Floyd 1994). Spronk and Renz have responded to the latter two of Floyd's criticisms (Spronk 1998; Renz 2009), but they and all others who defend an acrostic acknowledge their views require emending the text. Spronk, Renz, and Christensen, the most recent defenders of the acrostic hypothesis, each reconstruct the text differently and suggest that the acrostic is incomplete to varying degrees.

In all of these proposals for Nahum's acrostic, at least three lines do not begin with the appropriate letter in the alphabetic sequence, and they depend upon emendations that appeal to a Greek *Vorlage*. William Ross has recently examined the text-critical evidence and concludes that the witness of LXX Twelve Prophets does not support the emendation of the *dalet*, *zayin*, and *yod* lines. When Ross's results are applied, Christensen's proposal of six letters contains no more than two lines in alphabetic sequence. Spronk's and Renz's models possess no more than three sequential lines, and their acrostics are reduced to six and eight letters, respectively. Six to eight lines with several missing letters in the sequence simply do not comprise an alphabetic acrostic, and it casts doubt on whether the alphabetic pattern is intentional at all. Nogalski believes that a redactor disrupted an existing semi-acrostic in Nah 1:2–8 in order to make the passage correspond to the message of Mic 7:8–20, yet this hypothesis lacks any textual evidence and assumes that a redactor would intentionally deface a work of art. If redactors are authors, then Nogalski's claim that "It is highly improbable that a poet would deliberately choose to write a poem that is *almost* acrostic" (Nogalski 1993b, 102, emphasis his) certainly applies to redactors as well.

Apparently scholars have refused to abandon an idea that so artfully put on display the inventiveness of biblical criticism as a creative academic discipline. Floyd is correct to redirect the efforts of biblical scholarship to more legitimate and important matters when he writes, "The whole idea [of an acrostic] should therefore be abandoned, so that the interpretation of Nahum can begin to take a potentially more fruitful turn" (Floyd 1994, 437). Scholars should simply acknowledge what a German Lutheran pastor observed 150 years ago—the Hebrew alphabet may, and may not, have influenced the prophet's thought in Nah 1:3–7—and move on to more important, and more verifiable matters of interpretation.

Nahum in the Book of the Twelve

Most scholars have reached a broad consensus that the Twelve Prophets ought to be read as a collection, but on a diachronic level different redactions of the collection have been proposed, and on a synchronic level, readers possess varying understandings of the intertextual relationships within the collection.

Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah share the same ordering in both the MT and LXX and, when read synchronically, the last six books of the Twelve demonstrate a historical progression. Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah address the period of Assyrian and Babylonian domination over Judah absent the existence of Israel, and Haggai, (p. 477) Zechariah, and Malachi address the period of Persian hegemony. Walter Dietrich argues that Nahum and Habakkuk were combined into a two-prophet book prior to their incorporation into the Twelve and that they were added to the collection during the exilic reworking of both books. Within the Twelve, their superscriptions uniquely introduce their prophecies with the noun “burden” (*massa*) and the Hebrew root for “vision” (*ḥzh*). As to why Habakkuk with a Babylonian focus is placed between Nahum and Zephaniah, which focus on Assyria, Dietrich believes by the time the books were incorporated into the Twelve “Nineveh” and “Babylon” would have collectively represented the great Mesopotamian empire of Israel’s past. When read together, they present the following message: “Judah had every reason to be very much afraid of the empire and hoped, understandably, that God would disable this major power in time (Nah). But God decided to give it a free hand (Hab). In the end, however, divine judgment had to strike it (Zeph)” (Dietrich 2012, 149). Joseph Everson believes the prophecies of Nahum and Habakkuk should be understood as another reiteration of the “day of Yahweh” (Everson 2003): this day of judgment announced by Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Micah had come to pass in the fall of the northern kingdom in 721 BCE, but Nahum understands the fall of Nineveh in 612 as another manifestation.

The book of Jonah has long been read in conjunction with Nahum because both announce Nineveh’s destruction and disagree on the possibility of repentance. Beate Ego observes that the book of Tobit, written around 200 BCE, in its various redactions demonstrates the conflation of the books (Beate 2003). The long version, Tobit G^{11}, reads, “and hurry off to Media, for I believe the word of God that *Nahum* spoke about Nineveh, that all these things will take place and overtake Assyria and Nineveh” (14:4, NRSV) while the shorter and younger version reads, “Go to Media, my son, for I fully believe what *Jonah* the prophet said about Nineveh, that it will be overthrown” (14:4, RSV). Early interpreters were concerned that Nineveh’s repentance in Jonah contradicts Nahum’s prophecy of Nineveh’s inevitable destruction as demonstrated in Tob 14:4: “Indeed, everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel, whom God sent, will occur. None of all their words will fail, but all will come true at their appointed times” (NRSV, G^{11}). The introduction to *Ps.-J. Nah 1:1* refers to Jonah: “Previously Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher, prophesied against her and she repented of her sins; and when they sinned again, there prophesied once more against her Nahum Beth Koshi, as is recorded in this book.” Another attempt to resolve the seeming conflict between the messages of

Jonah and Nahum is found in *y. Taan. 2., 65b*: “Said R. Simeon ben Laqish, The repentance that the men of Nineveh carried out was deceitful…Said R. Yohanan, What they had in their hands they gave back, but what they had hidden in chests, boxes and cupboards, they did not give back” (Neusner 1987, 180–181). These interpretations demonstrate that Jonah and Nahum were read as a pair early on and that readers felt the need to harmonize their messages.

Because of various intertextual connections with other books within the Twelve, scholars believe Jonah and Nahum were redacted in conjunction with other books. Nogalski observes a structural pattern beginning with Micah and extending through Habakkuk. Micah and Nahum begin with a theophanic portrayal and end with a lament, (p. 478) and Habakkuk begins with a lament and ends in theophanic portrayal. Nahum 1 shares thirteen different words with Mic 7:8–20, and both Nahum and Habakkuk end with a theophanic hymn (Nogalski 1993a). He believes the use of Exo 34:6–7 in both Mic 7:18–20 and Nah 1:2–3 addresses the delay of God’s action—whether in regard to salvation for God’s people (Micah) or in vengeance toward their enemies (Nahum). Spronk observes the following correspondences between Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk: swift horses and horsemen of attackers (Nah 2:4–5; Hab 1:8–9); Yahweh’s coming shakes mountains and threatens waters (Nah 1:4–5; Hab 3:6–10); comfort on the day of distress (*yom ṣara*) (Nah 1:7; Hab 3:16); a city built with blood (Mic 3:10; Nah 3:1; Hab 2:12); watch closely (*ṣapa*) for Yahweh (Mic 7:7; Hab 2:1); write down a vision (Nah 1:1; Hab 2:2); and a closing and opening hymn (Nah 1; Hab 3). He concludes that Habakkuk was written as a sequel to Micah and Nahum (Spronk 2009, 6–7).

Given that Nahum quotes or alludes to Joel on a number of occasions, Nogalski believes Nah 1:3a, “The LORD is slow to anger but great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty” (NRSV), is dependent on Joel 2:13, “the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing” (NRSV). In his view, Jon 4:2 is a later composition and uses the same stereotypical speech in order to directly contradict Nahum. Schart observes the correspondence between Jon 3:9 and Joel 2:14, as well as the links between Jon 4:2, Joel 2:13, and Exo 34:6, concluding that the book of Jonah was written to satirically critique Joel’s vision of a nationalistic isolationism (Schart 2012).

When these books are read together, Zapff believes that Jonah corrects Joel’s call for war against the nations in 3:9–14 (Heb. 4:9–14) and that Nah 1:2–8 responds to the message of Jonah by restricting judgment to the enemies of Yahweh and to Nineveh (Zapff 2003). In his view, Joel’s announcement of the nations’ judgment at Mount Zion finds its equivalent in Mic 4:11–14 and 7:10; the final judgment of the nations who do not obey (Mic 5:5 [Heb. 5:14]) corresponds to Nah 1, where a distinction is made between the enemies of Yahweh (1:2) and those who take refuge in him (1:7). In the MT order, Micah is bracketed by two books that demonstrate both the salvation and judgment of Nineveh, and this ambivalence toward the nations is reflected in Micah’s message. The exaltation of Zion in Micah anticipates the theme of the humiliation of Zion’s female enemy counterpart, Nineveh, in Nahum. By connecting Mic 7:18, Jon 4:2, and Joel 2:13 with the grace formula of

Exod 34:6 (“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,” NRSV), Nineveh in the book of Jonah symbolizes the repentance of the nations. In contrast, Nahum’s scribal allusion to Exod 34:6–7 in 1:2 makes Nineveh a symbol of Yahweh’s judgment of the nations.

Jakob Wöhrle observes the correspondence between Joel 2:12–14; Jon 3:10, 4:2; Mic 7:18–20; Nah 1:2b, 3a; and Mal 1:9a, and the grace formula of Exod 34:6, and he attributes these passages to a common redactor. The two passages of Jonah comprise a secondary layer to the book that turns a narrative on universalistic theology into a practical-theological discourse on divine forgiveness. Assigning these passages to common redaction establishes the warrant for Wöhrle to read the passages synchronically as evidenced in his comment, “In a way, it could be said that Jonah was still sitting in front (p. 479) of Nineveh when the city was destroyed, as announced in the book of Nahum” (Wöhrle 2009, 16). When read in the context of this Grace corpus, the repentance in Jonah is to be understood not as a single act but a continuous turning to Yahweh. Nahum stresses that Yahweh’s willingness to forgive has limits, and that while God is slow to anger, Yahweh is able and willing to be angry.

Wöhrle’s redactional proposal has not been unanimously received. Both Spronk and Schart have objected to the notion of a Grace-corpus layer (Spronk 2009; Schart 2012). Spronk argues for the unity of Jonah and Nah 1 and points out that the Grace formula of Exod 34:6 occurs so frequently throughout the Old Testament that authors could have appealed to this ancient tradition independently. Schart argues that the verbal agreements between the passages are only significant in the case of Joel and Jonah and that the Grace-formula passages are better explained through their correspondence to other texts in the Twelve and the broader narrative of Exod 32–34. Spronk believes Jonah was written as a response to Joel and Nahum, and similarly Schart believes Jonah was written to satirize the message of Joel (Spronk 2009, 7–9; Schart 2012, 111–15).

It is worth noting that redactional proposals fail to address how the books of the Twelve ought to be read synchronically. Zapff accepts the rule, proposed by Schart, that the books of the Twelve ought to be read sequentially (Schart 1998, 26), yet this principle poses problems for him since Jonah appears before Nahum in the MT and LXX sequence. He asks, “But can one imagine that the book of Jonah was intentionally composed against the background of the following book of Nahum, so that the message of the book of Jonah composed in satirical manner is immediately depreciated by the book of Nahum, and that the prophet Jonah, who announced the destruction of the Nineveh, maintains his point ultimately? Probably not” (Zapff 2003, 301). Similarly Schart observes that the satirical character of the book of Jonah is somewhat lost by its placement after Amos and Obadiah in the MT sequence. What was purported originally written as a satirical fictive work is now historicized by its placement in the canonical sequence. Allowing Nahum to have the last word regarding Nineveh’s fate grates against modern sensibilities, and the final placement of Jonah reflects a misreading of the text according to scholars. It needs to be acknowledged that reading Jonah as a satirical critique of Joel and as a counterbalance to Nahum is an invention of modern scholarship that finds no support in ancient interpreta-

tion. For example, Theodore of Mopsuestia interprets Nahum as a sequel to Jonah and not the reverse (Theodore 2004, 245–248). Like the rabbis, he believes the repentance under Jonah was short-lived and goes on to read Jonah, Obadiah, and Nahum in sequence and interprets Nahum's invectives toward Assyria as analogous to Obadiah's condemnation of Idumea.

Complicating matters further are the different orderings of the books in the MT and LXX.[1] If the Twelve are to be read as a collection where meaning is tied to the sequence of books, the question remains whether to follow the synchronic or diachronic order, and whether the order of the MT or LXX. The majority of scholars consider the MT ordering to be original based upon Fuller's claim that the manuscript evidence from (p. 480) Qumran confirms that it goes back to at least 150 BCE (Fuller 1996), catchword connections between books that appear far more frequently in the MT, and the possibility that the MT sequence is the *lectio difficilior* (Seitz 2007, 204; Zapff 2003, 295). Guillaume and Brooke have challenged Fuller's findings regarding the DSS manuscripts (Guillaume 2007; Brooke 2006), however, and Jennifer Dines has demonstrated that meaningful catchwords appear in Hebrew and Greek in the LXX order (Dines 2012). Barry Jones concludes the MT and LXX traditions developed concurrently (Jones 1995). Sweeney continues to argue for the priority of the LXX sequence (Sweeney 2012), arguing that it demonstrates an interest in the fate of the northern kingdom and its implications for Jerusalem and Judah; rooted in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, it concerns the judgment of Israel, an anticipation of reunification under a Davidic king, the judgment of Jerusalem, and the restoration of Jerusalem. He writes, "Jonah's position prior to Nahum is auspicious in the LXX form of the Book of the Twelve. Nahum celebrates the downfall of Nineveh, the Assyrian oppressor spared in Jonah that went on to destroy Israel and subjugate Judah" (Sweeney 2012, 28). He argues that the anticipated judgment of the northern kingdom, rather than mere chronology, influenced the sequence of the LXX ordering.

Ancient interpreters were well aware of the existence of the different orders of the MT and LXX and attached different meanings to the books based upon their sequence. Jerome begins his commentary on Nahum by acknowledging its different placement in the Hebrew and Greek texts and assigning meaning based upon their different orderings: "According to the Seventy Translators, Nahum comes after Jonah in the sequence of the Twelve Prophets, because they seem to prophesy about the same city.…In contrast, Micah comes after Jonah in the Hebrew [Bible], and Micah is followed by Nahum, which means 'Consoler.' For, since the twelve tribes had already been taken into captivity by the Assyrians during the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah, now a vision against is seen during his reign to console the displaced people" (Scheck 2016, 1).

Since text-critical studies have demonstrated that the LXX can represent an earlier or different text type than the MT, the LXX can no longer be dismissed as a later corruption of an earlier MT text. For ecclesial communities who grant authority to the final canonical shape of the Bible, then, resolving the differences between the textual traditions is of vital importance. Lim argues that choosing a textual tradition is an ecclesial matter, and for Christians both the MT and LXX sequence of the Twelve ought to be valued since the

church from its early stages read from a multiplicity of Hebrew and Greek texts (Lim 2013).

Historical considerations cannot determine a normative reading of the Book of the Twelve, even though historical-critical scholarship tends to grant normativity to the final redactor. In the case of the Twelve, scholars inconsistently embrace the interpretive choices of redactors: as noted earlier, many argue that Jonah was redacted as a corrective to Nahum but do not explain why and how Jonah was placed before Nahum in the final form of the Twelve. Even if Jonah was originally written to critique Nahum, such a reading is overridden in the final form of the collection.

(p. 481) Divine Sexual Violence in Nahum

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Nahum has received sharp criticism for depicting Yahweh as a vengeful God who relishes the destruction of the Assyrians and the rape of Nineveh and, in so doing, condones ethnic nationalism, patriarchal oppression, and sexual violence (O'Brien 2002, 87–128). Commentators in the first half of the twentieth century accused Nahum of being a nationalistic poet and criticized its purported Jewish-centric message in contrast to a Christian message of universal forgiveness. G. A. Smith writes, "Such is the religion of the Proem to the Book of Nahum—thoroughly Oriental in its sense of God's method and resources of destruction; Jewish, and natural both to that and other ages of Jewish history, in the bursting of its pent hopes of revenge. We of the West might express these hopes differently" (Smith 1929, 91). Over the next century, the composition of academic biblical scholars, those that comprise Smith's "we," would markedly diversify and his colonial attitudes would be overturned.

Beginning in the early 1990s, feminist interpreters began to expose the patriarchal assumptions of the text and identify with its female characters, even those deemed enemies of God. Judith Sanderson was the first to object to the Nahum's depiction of women when she wrote, "What would it mean to worship a God who is portrayed as raping women when angry? And if humans see themselves in some way as the image of God, what would it mean to reflect that aspect of God's activity on the human level? To involve God in an image of sexual violence is, in a profound way, somehow to justify it and thereby sanction it for human males who are for any reason angry with a woman" (Sanderson 1992, 221). In conjunction with other feminist works critiquing "pornoprophetics," a series of studies followed, further exposing how Nahum's misogynistic and xenophobic rhetoric relies upon the logic of a patriarchal system that privileges the sexual activity of males and unduly punishes women. Nahum is complicit in upholding this unjust structure; as Gafney notes, "Nineveh is also a whore because the patriarchal palette is limited, and Nahum paints with only one end of that small spectrum" (Gafney 2017, 49). Because womanists and feminists oppose the oppressive system by which the poet operates, they reject the message of Nahum because of its uncritical stance against structural evil. The history of interpretation clearly demonstrates *who* reads the text determines *how* it is read, and *what* is found is in it. O'Brien admits, "I am considering what Nahum's rhetoric is doing to me

and to the readers that I choose to consult and cite" (O'Brien 2002, 23) and goes on to express, "As a woman, I see myself and women like me as the Nineveh who is stripped and raped, and I am horrified that someone would gloat over 'our' degradation" (O'Brien 2002, 28).

Two streams of interpretation have ensued, one focused on attempting to better understand Nahum in its ancient context, relying heavily on Assyriology and postcolonial criticism, and another seeking to critically reflect upon the reception of Nahum in the modern context through various literary and interdisciplinary approaches. The most comprehensive treatment from a historical approach has been conducted by (p. 482) Cynthia Chapman. She observes that the Assyrian kings' boasts of hypermasculine accomplishments functioned to bring "the domain of royal power into dynamic contact with the domain of idealized masculinity" (Chapman 2004, 13) and preyed upon male fears of feminization. Speech depicting a man becoming a woman or a prostitute, forfeiting his land, failing to secure an heir, or losing his bow all functioned to humiliate and intimidate opponents. By this masculine performance Assyrian kings legitimated their claim to the title of "shepherd" of the four corners of the universe. She interprets Assyrian reliefs of naked, limp, and impaled enemy soldiers coupled with battering rams penetrating their cities at the midpoint as visual depictions of the rhetoric of "lifting up of skirts" and "making one a prostitute." In regards to Nahum, Chapman understands the language of whoredom (3:3), the lifting up of skirts (3:4), and soldiers becoming women (3:13) as demonstrating that "biblical and Assyrian writers drew from a shared set of literary conventions regarding the use of gender in the recording of warfare" (Chapman 2004, 14). The prophet's explicit address to the "king of Assyria" and his "shepherds" in Nah 3:18 supports Chapman's thesis.

In addition to a denunciation of Assyrian claims to sovereignty, scholars have interpreted Nah 3 as a denunciation of Assyrian religion and hegemony in the figure of Ishtar. Chapman observes Ishtar is a gender-bending Assyrian goddess who claims to be a hierodule, associated with sexual allure, while at the same a warrior successful in battle. Gregory Cook adds, "Since the Neo-Assyrian Empire associated itself so closely to Ishtar and worshipped her as a prostitute, one may reasonably conclude that Nah 3:4 alludes to this characterization" (Cook 2016a, 146). He believes that it is precisely because the vulva was exaggerated and emphasized in Mesopotamian art and Ishtar's naked body was essential to her cult that Nahum employed the language of "lifting up skirts" as an act of cultic desecration (Cook 2016a). Chapman makes no criticism of biblical writers and appears to justify their actions by pointing out that "in the Israelite-Assyrian encounter, Assyria was the military aggressor, the one that imposed itself on the Israelite national landscape. Because of this historical fact, the writings of the biblical prophets concerning Assyria are necessarily a reaction to this military, diplomatic, and ideological imposition" (Chapman 2004, 19). Justifying Nahum's violent rhetoric because of Israel's political and military victimization to Assyria is nothing new, yet more recently scholars such as Wessels, Cook, and Timmer (Wessels 1998; Cook 2015; Timmer 2014) have interpreted Nahum through the lens of postcolonial criticism.

Sexual violence in Nahum is approached in other ways as well. O'Brien critiques earlier feminist approaches for focusing solely on the feminine character of Nineveh and failing to acknowledge the pervasiveness of the Bible's patriarchal assumptions and for essentializing gender. O'Brien is concerned that literary and historical approaches fail to give a face to victims of rape and war, and therefore she employs war photography and film studies to emphasize the realism of these atrocities and the manner in which war metaphors continue to influence actual acts of violence (O'Brien 2002; O'Brien 2010, 112–130). On the other hand, Laurel Lanner reads Nahum in conjunction with theories of the literary fantastic, where literature functions as an escape from reality. Fantasy operates on the assumption that what is described is not real and therefore Nahum "is a (p. 483) narrative of threat where the violence threatened exists only in language and this is possibly where, in Nahum especially, fantasy of the psychological imagination and the literary sort collide: the rape of Assyrians is impossible for Nahum and his people and similarly the rape of a goddess is also. In the end, it may only be achieved through language" (Lanner 2006, 208).

Nahum's sexual and violent imagery is fueled by desire and the fears of unfulfilled desire, and therefore interpreting the book's language on this topic requires understanding the dynamics and complexities of human, and in particular masculine, desire. Comparative ANE and postcolonial approaches interpret Nahum as an act of colonial mimetic desire (Girard 1977, 143–168; Bhabha 1994, 121–131). In this view Israel is placed in the double-bind of viewing Assyria as both model and rival, and its desire for violent retribution is a learned behavior. Nahum adopts the rhetorical tools of the empire to unmask its illusions of power and resist its hegemony, but in doing so it evolves into what Girard deems "the monstrous double." Feminist and womanist interpreters do not discount such a reading, but they want to call attention to the issue of patriarchy. As Lanner observes, Nahum "is a book of sexual tension, of hatred and desire" (Lanner 2006, 230), and these seemingly contradictory impulses expose male anxieties over the power women wield over them through sex. No other act than rape highlights the intersection of these competing feelings of resentment, fear, and attraction, and the desire for dominance. As noted, these feelings transgress gender binaries and may be directed toward men and women.

Such scholars do not want readers to quickly dismiss the power and the nature of the signifier and fixate on the signified of the metaphor, since sexual violence continues to wield power today in the same manner. Ultimately what one desires shapes one's hermeneutic and determines one's interpretation of Nahum. For example, Wilda Gafney, who expresses her desire for safety from the constant threat of sexual violence, states, "Nahum is not good news for me" (Gafney 2017, 64). Alternatively Corrine Carvalho admits, "I am attracted to this kind of god, not because I want to be the victim of divine violence, and not because I am secure in my own righteousness, but because at the end of the day I want a God who cares enough to be angry, involved enough to do something, and divine enough to accomplish what humans shouldn't even try" (Carvalho 2010, 151).

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Notes:

[1.] See “Hebrew Manuscripts and Versions” elsewhere in this volume.

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Habakkuk

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay first examines critical studies on the book of Habakkuk by surveying redactional and textual discussions, as well as historical-critical issues. Since historical-critical method fails to shed light on the heart of the book, this essay opts for synchronic methodology. Considering the final form of the text, the essay examines literary devices such as genre, structure, content, and plot to uncover the themes of the book—theodicy, the righteous shall live by faithfulness, retribution, and divine sovereignty. Lastly, the essay investigates the positioning of Habakkuk in the Twelve, especially how it fits into House's U-shaped comic framework as the overall plot of the Book of the Twelve. The essay then concludes that the message of Habakkuk is just as relevant today as it was in the prophet's time.

Keywords: Habakkuk, theodicy, retribution, righteousness, theophany, Paul House

THE book of Habakkuk is unique among the Minor Prophets, especially in matters of form and content. In *form*, it lacks any of the usual prophetic messenger formulae such as "thus says the LORD" or "the word of the LORD came to"; instead, it is framed as a lament detailing the prophet's complaints to the LORD. In *content*, it lacks the usual prophetic accusation of Israel's sin and exhortation to return to the LORD so as to avert divine punishment; instead, Habakkuk stands on the side of the populace and complains to YHWH of his apparent inactivity despite pervasive social injustice (1:2–4). In the prophet's view, "justice delayed is justice denied" (Reddit 2008, 302). When YHWH replies that he is about to raise up the Chaldeans to punish the Israelites, Habakkuk is further infuriated by the divine decision and questions the divine justice and rightness of using such a brutal agent (1:12–17). Clearly, the book of Habakkuk deals with the issue of theodicy and engages both Habakkuk and YHWH in dialogues. Its bold challenge of divine justice sets it apart from other prophetic books.

Critical Issues

For a book of only three chapters, Habakkuk has generated a disproportionate number of scholarly works. Peter Jöcken surveys the work of more than three hundred scholars on the book of Habakkuk between 1820 and 1977 (Jöcken 1977), and Oskar Dangl reviews over fifty scholarly works in the 1990s (Dangl 2001, 131–168). Indeed, Rex Mason describes questions raised by the book of Habakkuk as a "minefield for critical study" (Mason 1994, 60). Critical studies on the book of Habakkuk can be divided into two main areas: (1) redaction and textual criticism and (2) historical critical questions.

(p. 488) Redaction and Textual Criticism

While most scholars see Habakkuk as a literary unity, they differ in their views of the history of the composition of the book. Some see the whole book as the authentic words of the prophet (Heflin 1985, 77; Robertson 1990, 38–40; Patterson 1991, 127–129), others presume only minor redactional activities on the book (Watts 1996, 217–221), while a few argue for a more complex literary composition process that involves many redactional layers (Peckham 1986, 617–636; Sweeney 1992, 3; Nogalski 1993, 129–181, 274–280). Scholars who employ redaction criticism come to different conclusions because they work with different methodologies and presuppositions; for this reason, redactional approaches tend to be subjective and run the risk of circular argument (Mason 1994, 79).

Habakkuk 3 poses the biggest challenge to redaction criticism. Not only does this chapter have an independent superscription and subscription with musical notations which separate it from the previous two chapters, but also its absence from the Qumran *pesher* on Habakkuk prompts many scholars to conclude that it is not originally part of the book. Its absence in the *pesher* might be because the Qumran community regarded it as a psalm rather than a prophecy and thus felt no need for a *pesher* (Ko 2014, 16). While the musical notations in the superscription and subscription may indicate the cultic function of this chapter, they cannot be used to argue that Hab 3 is not original to the book. Since superscriptions are usually considered as later editorial additions, it is possible that this chapter was used in worship by later generations. Even though there is no scholarly consensus on whether the theophanic psalm of chapter 3 was composed by the prophet, most recognize this chapter to be an integral part of the book, for it helps to address the issue of theodicy (Wendland 1999, 611; Ko 2014, 19; Whitehead 2016, 275).

The book is full of textual problems, especially chapter 3. While many scholars see the Hebrew text as corrupt and propose extensive corrections to the text (e.g., 1:9; 2:4; 3:4, 6, 9, etc.), most still prefer the MT, especially the consonantal text (Dangl 2001, 131–135; Haak 1991, 5; Bruce 1993, 835). In a recent study on Hab 3, Lortie evaluates various ancient Versions of the text and argues that the differences in translations are due to interpretive choices rather than a different Hebrew *Vorlage* (Lortie 2017). He also works carefully through Hab 3 verse by verse to establish the original Hebrew text, reconstructing a

text which is closer to the MT than other text-critical studies would allow (Banister 2018, 319).

Historical-Critical Issues

Historical questions, in a large part, relate to the identities of the “wicked” and the “righteous” in 1:4, 13; and 2:4. Do these terms always refer to the same groups, or do they refer to different groups in different contexts? Are the “wicked” internal oppressors within Judean society or are they foreign oppressors? Earlier scholars identified the wicked with various foreign invaders. Options include Assyria, Egypt, the Greeks and (p. 489) Macedonians under Alexander, and even Nicanor (Johnson 1985, 258). Dangl gives an overview of various positions current in the 1990s (Dangl 2001, 139–144).

Most scholars today think that “the wicked” refers to the same group of people throughout the book: since the “Chaldeans” are mentioned in 1:6 and later identified as “the wicked” who swallow “the righteous” (1:13), they are likely the Babylonians. Such a position raises difficulties, however. Identifying “the wicked” with the same group in both 1:4 (Habakkuk’s initial complaint) and 1:13 (Habakkuk’s second complaint after God’s response) would suggest that Habakkuk objected to divine judgment on the foreign oppressors, an objection that runs contrary to the rhetoric of the book. Moreover, if “the wicked” in 1:4 is the same group of foreigners in 1:13, then YHWH’s command to the prophet to “be astounded!” in 1:5 is illogical if the deity were speaking of the same group about which the prophet was complaining. Some scholars respond to this latter objection by suggesting that the raising up of the Chaldeans in 1:5–11 is not YHWH’s response to Habakkuk’s complaint but the cause of his complaint (Johnson 1985, 258–259; Floyd 1991, 397–418; Sweeney 1991, 67; Prinsloo 2004, 621–645). This conjecture is weak at several points. First, it requires unnecessary rearrangement of the text while the text makes sense as it stands. Second, the invasion of the Chaldeans is portrayed as a future event in the book (3:16), but in 1:2–4 the prophet has apparently lamented to God for a long time about the injustice and violence in his society. Third, the words “law,” “justice,” and “violence” are usually used to implicate the Israelites. For these reasons, it is more sensible to read the wicked in 1:4 as those within Judea who persecute the righteous and cause the law to be paralyzed, while the wicked in 1:13 are the Chaldeans whom YHWH has raised up and about whom Habakkuk complains.

Because of the paucity of historical datum, a wide range of dates have been proposed for the book’s composition. Most scholars agree that the period under the reign of Jehoiakim (609–597 BCE) best fits the situation described in Habakkuk (Baker 1988, 44–45; Haak 1991, 111–139; Bailey and Barker 1998, 257–260; Dangl 2001, 141). Jehoiakim was an unworthy successor of his father, Josiah. He mistreated his own citizens by imposing heavy taxes and forced labor (2 Kgs 23:35–37; Jer 22:13–23), he persecuted and murdered the prophets, and he did not fear the LORD (Jer 26:20–23; 36:1–32). Habakkuk’s initial complaint in 1:2–4 well suits this biblical description of Jehoiakim’s reign. YHWH’s response that he is raising up the Chaldeans in 1:5–6 to punish Judah likely reflects the time before the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BCE, since the Chaldeans only become a threat to Judah

after that event. The Chaldean aggression was increasingly felt by Judah after the defeat of the Egyptians by the Babylonians in Carchemish, to which Habakkuk's second complaint attests (1:12–17). The prophet's own word that he has to wait quietly for the enemy to come (3:16) seems to confirm this setting.

Due to the scarcity of historical data, Childs laments that the historical-critical method fails to provide fruitful access to the heart of the book and may even obscure its meaning if the wrong questions are asked (Childs 1979, 454–455). Synchronic study of the book, which focuses on the final form and the literary artistry of the book as presented in the MT, may help to supplement the oversights of the traditional historical and (p. 490) form criticisms (Dangl 2001, 153–154). More recent synchronic works aim to unveil the messages and insights of the book and to contemporize and recontextualize the book in the present (O'Neal 2007; Matthews 2012; Ko 2014).

Genre

Various genres for Habakkuk have been proposed, including a prophetic liturgy used for a cultic purpose, a report on the prophet's visionary experience, a wisdom text which deals with the issue of theodicy, a lament, and a *massa* or "oracle" (see survey in Ko 2014, 24–28). Wendland suggests that the whole book of Habakkuk matches the constituent elements of a lament (Wendland 1999, 601–602). Although there is no consensus on the genre of the book, most would agree that it consists of eclectic genres, including dialogues (1:2–2:5), woe oracles (2:6–20), and a theophanic psalm (3:3–15), subsumed under a lament framework (Wendland 1999, 607).

Structure

The scholarly consensus holds that Habakkuk consists of three major sections: a dialogue between the prophet and God (1:1–2:4[5]), a series of woe oracles (2:6–20), and a concluding psalm in chapter 3 (Childs 1979, 448). Sweeney and others take the superscriptions in 1:1 and 3:1 seriously and suggest that the book should be divided into two main parts: the oracle of Habakkuk in chapters 1 and 2 and the prayer of the prophet in chapter 3 (Sweeney 1991, 64).

By taking into account of both superscriptions (1:1; 3:1) and the internal literary markers, I divide the book into three interrelated scenes as follows:

Superscription (1:1)

Scene 1Habakkuk's first complaint (1:2–4)

YHWH's first response (1:5–11)

Habakkuk's second complaint (1:12–17)

Scene 2Habakkuk's action (2:1)

YHWH’s second response (2:2–5)

The five woe oracles (2:6–20)

Superscription (3:1)

Scene 3Habakkuk’s petition (3:2)

The theophany (3:3–15)

Habakkuk’s reaction (3:16–19a)

Subscription (3:19b)

Following the superscription of 1:1, scene 1 comprises Habakkuk’s first complaint (1:2–4), YHWH’s first response (1:5–11), and Habakkuk’s second complaint (1:12–17).

(p. 491) The scene changes in 2:1 when Habakkuk goes to the rampart to wait for YHWH’s response. YHWH’s second response comes in 2:2–5, which is followed by five woe oracles (2:6–20) put into the mouth of the victimized nations to create irony. The superscription of 3:1 precedes the third scene which records Habakkuk’s petition (3:2), a theophany (3:3–15), and Habakkuk’s reaction (3:16–19a). The musical notations in the subscription of 3:19b, together with the superscription of 3:1, form an *inclusio* to this scene.

These three subsections in each of the scenes form a somewhat concentric pattern with YHWH’s response or actions at the center. The purpose of such an arrangement is to highlight YHWH’s response and actions. Read this way, the center of the book seems to fall on YHWH’s second response in 2:2–5.

Content and Plot

Whereas most of the prophetic books are anthological in nature and may not have a consistent flow, Habakkuk has a simple plot. Events are so logically and intricately linked to one another that excising any part of the book or rearranging the text would damage its literary artistry and the plotline.

The book of Habakkuk begins in scene 1, with the prophet’s complaint to YHWH, accusing him of ignoring his cry for help and turning a blind eye to the injustice and mayhem caused by the wicked in the Judean society (1:2–4). While the wicked are not named, the expressions of “law is paralyzed” and “justice is never upheld, and comes out perverted” (1:4) may indicate that they are likely the Judeans. The sudden change of speaker in v. 5 startles the reader with YHWH’s surprise response of raising up the ferocious and impetuous Chaldeans to judge Judah (1:5–11). This divine answer is unconventional and unexpected, for YHWH is supposed to grant a comforting message to the righteous petitioner. YHWH’s response propels the plot to the next level, for Habakkuk is so confounded that he further complains to God, questioning divine attributes and the rightness of using such a wicked and brutal nation to judge others more righteous than Babylon (1:12–17).

Scene 2 depicts Habakkuk as a sentinel standing on a rampart waiting for YHWH's response and contemplating his own answer to his anticipated divine reproof (2:1). God does not rebuke the prophet but instead orders him to write the vision down clearly on tablets and admonishes him to wait for the fulfillment of the vision which is imminent (2:2–3). YHWH then reveals the different destinies of the righteous and the wicked: he intends the righteous to live by his faithfulness, but the haughty ones will not endure (2:4–5).

The ensuing five woe oracles further show the outworking of retribution theology (2:6–20). Not only do the woe oracles help to propel the overall plot of the book by showing the actions of the conqueror and his eventual demise, but also each oracle contains its own three phases of the plot: conflict, climax, and resolution. The crimes committed by the Babylonians develop throughout the oracles from economic oppression (2:6b–8), (p. 492) to cutting off other nations for profit (2:9–11), to plundering many peoples so as to build their own city (2:12–13), and to the exploitation and stripping naked of both people and nature (2:15–17). The indictment climaxes with idolatry, the root of all crimes (2:18–19). The reason for the delay of the mention of "woe" until v. 19 in the last oracle is to provide an *inclusio*, together with v. 6b, for this woe section. The interjection of a doxology in 2:14 serves to contrast the futility of human endeavor by violence and the eventual manifestation of God's glory. The call to silence in the LORD's presence in 2:20, which contrasts the uselessness of the idols and the holiness of God, provides a fitting end to the whole woe oracles section as well as anticipating the theophany in chapter 3.

The superscription of chapter 3 reveals the change in Habakkuk's attitude by indicating that it is his prayer. Scene 3 begins with Habakkuk's reflection on YHWH's salvific work in Israel's history and his plea to the LORD to revive his deeds and mercy (3:2). The theophanic vision that he then receives (3:3–15) can be divided into two concentric units. The first, enveloped by the geographical terms in 3:3a and 3:7 (Hiebert 1987, 122–123), describes divine majesty and the consequences of God's manifestation on earth (3:3–7). The second portrays YHWH as a warrior coming to deliver his people (3:8–15). The mention of river and sea (3:8, 15) and the standing still of sun and moon in their places (3:11) are reminiscent of the Exodus (Exod 14:15–31) and conquest traditions (Josh 3:14–4:12; 10:12). The words "your horses" and "against/in the sea" in 3:8 and 3:15 form an *inclusio* for this unit.

The theophany causes great fear and awe in the prophet, but at the same time it boosts his faith to such an extent that he resolves to rejoice in the LORD even when all necessities of life are absent because the LORD is his strength and victory (3:16–19a). The musical notations in 3:19b and in 3:1b form an *inclusio* for the whole chapter, as well as denoting its cultic function. Many earlier scholars saw this as evidence that Habakkuk was a cultic prophet (Albright 1950, 9; Nielsen 1953, 59; Eaton 1964, 144–171; Watts 1975, 121–122; Johnson 1979, 5; Széles 1987, 5), but the musical notations can also mean that this chapter is used for worship by later generations. Chapter 3 proves to be essential in

settling the theodicy issues previously raised and is considered to be an integral part of the book (Wendland 1999, 601, 611).

Themes

Theodicy

The book of Habakkuk evolves as the prophet struggles to resolve the issue of theodicy. Habakkuk wrestles with his belief in a benevolent God as proclaimed in the Torah in the face of the lived reality of violence and injustice in the world. His complaint in 1:2 shows that he has been lamenting to YHWH for a long time, “How long, O LORD, will I cry for help, and you do not hear? I cry out to you ‘Violence,’ yet you do not save?” He goes on to (p. 493) describe the chaotic situation in his society, using forensic terms such as “judgment/justice,” “righteous,” “wicked,” and words such as “violence,” “iniquity,” “mischief,” “destruction,” “strife,” and “contention,” hoping to arouse YHWH to action (1:2–3). According to Habakkuk, YHWH the righteous Judge should uphold justice by restricting evil and protecting the righteous; to ignore the well-being of the righteous and let them perish with the wicked is a direct violation of the teaching of the Torah (cf. Gen 18:22–33) and an infringement on divine justice.

YHWH’s surprise response in 1:5–11 further complicates the issue. YHWH not only fails to alleviate the problem but actually intensifies it by bringing an even more brutal enemy to invade Judah to mete out his judgment. The havoc caused by the Chaldeans would bring even more hardship to the suffering righteous. Habakkuk questions God’s choice of agent to carry out justice, for it is incongruent with the divine holy nature (1:12–13). He also accuses God of making humans vulnerable like sea creatures with no ruler and of letting the Chaldeans treat people like fish (1:14–15). In scene one, Habakkuk raises the theodic cry against God, and scenes two and three show how the issue of theodicy is resolved.

The Righteous in His Faithfulness Shall Live

YHWH’s answer in 2:4b that “the righteous in his faithfulness shall live” addresses Habakkuk’s concern for the well-being of the righteous. Although YHWH seems to ignore Habakkuk’s question regarding divine justice, he knows that Habakkuk is not raising philosophical or speculative questions on theodicy (such as God’s existence, divine ability to deal with evil, or his goodness) (Whitehead 2016, 268) but rather the existential question of how the righteous are to survive in the midst of evil and calamity. The prophet’s concern for the righteous can be seen in his repeated lament that the wicked are oppressing the righteous (1:4bα; 1:13bβ).

YHWH’s promise that “the righteous will live by his faithfulness” in 2:4b becomes the turning point of the book. It assures Habakkuk that YHWH will not let the righteous perish as long as they hold on to their trust in the LORD. Not only is this statement consid-

ered by many as the key verse of the book, but also its significance to both the Jews and Christians cannot be overstated. Jewish Rabbi Nachman ben Isaac (ca. 350 CE) summed up the 613 Mosaic laws with the one commandment recorded here. The three citations of this verse in the New Testament (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) attest to its importance in the Christian faith.

But whose faithfulness the writer has in mind is ambiguous. Some suggest the reference is to the reliability of the vision (Jansen 1980, 59–62), but the word "faithfulness" (*emuna*) usually describes the conduct of a person or God (Jepsen 2003, 1:317). The Septuagint interprets the faithfulness as God's: "but the just shall live by my (God's) faithfulness." More likely, it is the faithfulness of the righteous that is in view, since the closest antecedent is the "righteous one" and the term contrasts with the "proud" in 2:4a. The ambiguity of "his faithfulness" also allows the possibility that the righteous one who (p. 494) perseveres in his faithful trust in God's faithfulness will live. In his confession at the end of the book (3:16–19a), Habakkuk lives out this assurance.

Retribution Theology

Retribution theology asserts that God rewards the good and punishes the bad deeds of humankind. As a man of deep religious conviction, Habakkuk's strong sense of justice is greatly rooted in the Torah, which teaches retribution theology. An example of such teaching is Deut 28, which lists the blessings for obeying God's commandments (28:1–14) and the curses for disobedience (28:15–68). Habakkuk cannot tolerate any injustice, even when it is perceived to be coming from God, and he demands that God rectify the problem. YHWH's response in 2:4–5 answers his concern, with the ensuing five woes in 2:6–20 reversing fortunes: the creditor becomes the debtor (2:6b–8); the one who gets evil gains shame (2:9–11); the city built by bloodshed will be burnt—builders toiling for nothing (2:12–13); those who intoxicate others will have to drink the cup of wrath from the LORD (2:15–17); and those who worship worthless idols become worthless themselves (2:18–19). The punishment fits the crime. This theme of retribution can also be found in other parts of the book, albeit less overtly. For example, in scene one when the Judeans refuse to obey God's law and pervert justice, then they must suffer injustice under Nebuchadnezzar (1:4, 7); and in scene three when the Chaldeans are rejoicing in their slaughtering of the victims, they in turn will be killed by their own weapons (3:14; cf. Ps 37:14–15).

Divine Sovereignty

Closely related to the issue of theodicy is divine sovereignty, for the righteous must know that the Sovereign God, who upholds the universe, is a God of justice. Abraham's question, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" (Gen 18:25) certainly resonates with Habakkuk. He audaciously challenges God twice on the issue of theodicy (1:2–4, 12–17) and by implication divine sovereignty. Even the Chaldeans, God's chosen agents, do not honor God but accredit their success to their might (1:11b, 16).

In his second response to Habakkuk, YHWH affirms his sovereignty by declaring the certainty of the vision which will surely come in an appointed time (2:2–3). This indicates that YHWH does have a plan which will be realized in due course. The pronouncement of the different destinies of the wicked and the righteous (2:4–5) confirms God's sovereign will, and the fitting judgment of the oppressors in the woe oracles (2:6–20) demonstrates divine justice. God's glory will fill the earth in spite of human wickedness (2:14), and he is still in full control in his holy abode despite the pandemonium in human society (2:20).

YHWH's sovereignty is in full display in the theophany (3:3–15). He is portrayed as a King coming with an entourage of pestilence (*deber*) and plague (*reshef)*, which are also (p. 495) the names of the demons "Deber" (Lete 1995, 231–232) and "Resheph" (Xella 1995, 701–703) in the ancient Near East. YHWH's manifestation in the natural elements is described in vivid terms to arouse awe and fear so as to wipe out any doubt in divine power (3:3–7). While the Chaldeans' military force looks powerful and invincible (1:6–11, 15–17), they cannot be compared to the natural forces such as pestilence and plague, or volcanic and seismic activities as well as thunderstorms and flooding, which are all at God's disposal. Showing the Chaldeans as pawns in the divine grand plan allays the prophet's concern that the Chaldeans are unstoppable.

YHWH is also described as a warrior coming to deliver his people so as to reveal his faithfulness and his compassion (3:8–15). The language in this part is reminiscent of YHWH's deliverance of Israel in the Exodus and the early conquest and thus serves as a direct answer to Habakkuk's plea in 3:2 for God to revive his work. God's purpose of coming is clearly stated, "You came forth for the salvation of your people; for the salvation of your anointed you struck the head of the house of the evil" (3:13). The theophany shows that YHWH is a faithful God who has the power and passion to see his plan of salvation for his people accomplished. The issues raised by Habakkuk in earlier chapters are settled in the theophany, and he resolves to trust the LORD regardless of his circumstances (Wendland 1999, 611–612).

The Positioning of Habakkuk in the Book of the Twelve

While it is important to read the twelve Minor Prophets individually, more scholars now take the editorial links and intentional allusions within the Twelve seriously and read them as a literary whole in order to gain a canonical perspective (Kessler 2016, 216–219). A related issue is the order of the books, the first six of which are sequenced differently in the Hebrew and Greek versions. The overall arrangement of the Twelve reflects not only the theological emphasis of the final editor but also how the individual prophets are heard (Sweeney 2000, 56–64).

Paul House proposes that the ordering of the Twelve in the MT highlights the main themes of the prophetic messages: the first six books (Hosea–Micah) emphasize the sin of Israel and the nations; the next three books (Nahum–Zephaniah) stress the punishment of

the sin; then the last three postexilic books (Haggai–Malachi) feature the restoration of all from the sin (House 1990, 68, 72). He further suggests that the plot of the Twelve forms a U-shaped comic framework: the fortune of Israel and other nations begins with Hosea and spirals downward until it hits the nadir at Habakkuk, then starts to inch upward to Malachi (House 1990, 123–124).

Since all three elements of sin, punishment, and restoration are present in all the Minor Prophets, House's scheme has often been criticized as minimizing the hope elements in the first six prophets and ignoring the pessimistic elements in the postexilic (p. 496) Judean society as portrayed in the last three prophets. Despite these criticisms, House's U-shaped overall plot of the Twelve corresponds well to the spiraling down of the fate of Israel and Judah from the mid-eighth century (Hosea-Micah) to the darkest days during the late seventh to early sixth centuries BCE, especially after the death of Josiah in the Battle of Megiddo in 609 BCE (Nahum–Zephaniah). Restoration followed during the Persian period with the return of the exiles to rebuild the Temple (Haggai–Malachi). Even though the postexilic Judean society was not nearly as rosy as had been prophesized, the return from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple signified a partial fulfillment of God's promise and his presence, and Malachi ends with the hope of the coming of the Messiah (Ko 2013, 320–326).

Read in this way, the position of Habakkuk is at the lowest point of the Twelve, during the darkest hour of Judah's history when the nation was under the tyrannical rule of Jehoiakim and the catastrophe of the Babylonian invasion is imminent. This explains the use of the lament framework for this book, for lament is the most appropriate genre for expressing an array of emotions generated by pain and suffering. It lets the righteous raise their concern, doubt, hurt, and even frustration and anger to their supreme Judge YHWH, hoping to arouse his compassion so as to intervene on their behalf. The prophet's lament represents the desperate cry of the Judeans during the national crisis.

Conclusion

Habakkuk is the only book in the Twelve that tells from a human perspective the misery and agony that the Judeans face as YHWH is about to carry out his judgment. It thus fills an important lacuna in the Book of the Twelve, in that it gives a voice to the suffering righteous when the nation is facing destruction. This suits its position at the trough of the Twelve.

Habakkuk's confession of trust in 3:17–19 demonstrates how a righteous person may live in the face of extreme calamity: trust and wait patiently for the LORD, rejoice in the LORD and draw strength from him even when all life's necessities are deprived. The prophet embodies the divine message of "the righteous shall live by his faithfulness" (2:4) and becomes a paradigm for all generations to follow.

Since we live in an imperfect world where catastrophe, tragedy, violence, and injustice are prevalent, unpredictable, and unavoidable, the issue of theodicy is a common universal question. Hence the message of Habakkuk is just as relevant and apropos today as it was in the days of the prophet.

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Zephaniah

Cat Quine

The Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets
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Abstract and Keywords

This essay discusses the key topics for the study of the book of Zephaniah, including structure, authorship, date, central themes, Zephaniah's relationship with the Book of the Twelve, and the Hebrew Bible. The themes explored include the Day of Yahweh, illicit cult practice, the contrast between corrupt elite classes and a humble remnant, the city, redemption, and restoration. Many of these themes are found in the other Minor Prophets, but they find unique expression in Zephaniah, carefully crafted to convey the prophet's message. The essay ends with a reflection on how to read Zephaniah—how to make sense of the individuality of the book among the plurality of intertextual connections found within it.

Keywords: Zephaniah, book of Zephaniah, authorship and date, Day of Yahweh, reading Zephaniah, intertextuality, cult

THE book of Zephaniah offers simplicity and complexity in equal measure. While it is rich with intertextual connections with materials within and outside biblical prophetic literature, the understanding of Zephaniah's relation to these depends heavily on the interpretive lens of the reader and, often, the date assigned to the text. Literarily the book is set in the reign of Josiah with a backdrop of cultic reform and geopolitical developments toward the end of the seventh century, yet the emphasis on a humble remnant of the people and the restoration of Zion suggest a later date. The oscillation of the book between specificity and vagueness, judgement and restoration, and Yahweh and the prophet renders its interpretation both simple and infinitely complex. The theological message of judgement upon sinners and a call for the people of Judah to humble themselves and return to Yahweh, who will eventually restore them, is clear, yet how this message fits with other biblical books and editorial activity invites multiple questions about the nature of prophecy and scribal processes.

Structure

There is much debate about the structure of Zephaniah, clearly demonstrated in the diversity among manuscripts and commentators ancient and modern (e.g., Berlin 1994, 17–20; Floyd 2000, 165–171; Ben Zvi 1991, 21–38). Most agree that there is a simple tripartite thematic structure comprised of judgement on Judah and Jerusalem (1:2–2:3), judgment on the nations (2:4–3:8), and restoration of Judah and the nations (3:9–20), created through skillful interweaving of smaller oracles (Nogalski 1993, 171–178). Zephaniah 1, for example, comprises an oracle of judgement on the entire earth (1:2–3) and judgement on Judah and Jerusalem (1:4–18), though this could be broken down further through the admonition to "be silent" before Yahweh (1:7) and the announcement that the day of Yahweh is near (1:14). Although 2:1–3 is also directed against Judah, whether it originally belonged with 1:14–18 is debatable as 1:18 ends with a declaration of an end to (p. 500) all the inhabitants of the earth which links with 1:2–3. Zephaniah 2:4–15 could be simply viewed as a collection of oracles against the nations or could be subdivided into oracles against specific nations: 2:1–3 (against Judah), 2:4–7 (against Philistia), 2:8–10 (against Moab and Ammon), 2:11 (against the coastlands), 2:12 (against Cush), and 2:13–15 (against Assyria). Zephaniah 3 could be divided into 3:1–7 (against the city), 3:8–13 (judgement resulting in restoration), and 3:14–20 (restoration) or could be further subdivided using key phrases such as "therefore wait for me says Yahweh" (3:8), "at that time" (3:9), "on that day" (3:11), and "sing aloud" (3:14). The question of the structure and division of Zephaniah thus depends on what the reader is emphasizing.

House (1988) offers the most unique interpretation of structure, viewing Zephaniah as a prophetic drama and emphasizing the continual changes in speaker between Yahweh and the prophet. Few follow this reading, though numerous commentators highlight the need to pay close attention to the rhetoric of the book and the ways in which it addresses the reader (e.g., Ball 1988; Floyd 2000; Sweeney 2003). Berlin (1994) prefers to maintain a literary approach that does not depend too much on subdivisions of content, while Ben Zvi (1991, 325–358) speaks of precompositional, compositional, and postcompositional stages that originated in the postmonarchic period. Recently, Werse (2018) has revisited the tripartite interpretation but argued for a different understanding of the parts wherein 1:18–2:3 and 3:6–8 frame the oracles against the nations.

I view the book as composed of six primary parts: superscription (1:1); judgement on the earth, Judah, and Jerusalem (1:2–18); exhortation to seek Yahweh and act accordingly (2:1–3); oracles against nations (2:4–15); judgment on the city (3:1–8); and forthcoming restoration (3:9–20). I suspect that divisions of the content of Zephaniah, however, say far more about later readers than they do about the historical book.

Authorship and Date

The superscription of Zephaniah dates its content to the time of Josiah (640–609 BCE), which implies a background of the diminishing importance of Assyria and the cultic reform of Josiah. Hagedorn (2011) is quite right to observe that Zephaniah must be examined on its own terms before being put into conversation with other biblical material, especially 2 Kgs 22–23. The oracles against the nations in Zeph 2 offer the best evidence for a seventh-century date in that they proclaim judgement on nations surrounding Judah who profited from Neo-Assyrian rule (Welch 2013; Crouch 2017); this leads to proposals that the book grew outward from this core (Hagedorn 2011, 465–469). Notably, any date for 2:4–15 after 597 must account for the absence of oracles against Babylon, Tyre, and Edom found variously in numerous exilic prophetic texts (Nogalski 1993, 173).

The denunciation of illicit cultic activity in 1:4–6 has also influenced discussions of date. Some connect the polemic against the Host of heaven with astral worship prevalent in the seventh centuries (Kapelrud 1975, 42; Elliger 1967, 62; Eaton 1961, 122–127). Differently, but (p. 501) still within the realm of the late seventh century, others view the political nature of the *kemarim* in 1:4 (“idolatrous priests,” NRSV) as reflecting diplomatic relations between Judah and Aram, whether they were Judeans practicing Aramean rituals (Radine 2016) or Arameans practicing Judean rituals (Irsigler 2002, 110; Quine, see later). Such connections with Aram would reflect the late pre-exilic era. The “remnant of Baal” in 1:4 has led some to conclude that Zephaniah’s message followed Josiah’s reform, indicting cultic practices that had survived in the reign of Jehoiakim (Hyatt 1948; Williams 1963).

The superscription of Zephaniah states, “The word of Yahweh which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah,” and literarily sets the book within the time of King Josiah. The opening “word of Yahweh” connects Zephaniah with Hosea, Micah, and Joel, all of which open similarly. The superscription acknowledges that Zephaniah’s oracles were viewed retrospectively by the author but presented as one “word” to the reader (Floyd 2000, 172). However, the unusually long patronym of the prophet is not clear. Cushi can be an ethnic term or may refer to an Israelite of Cushite descent (e.g., Jer 36:14), though this identification is not given attention in the book.

If the mention of Hezekiah is to the Judean king of that name, then this indicates that the prophet was of royal descent and perhaps ideologically connected to Hezekiah’s reforms (2 Kgs 18:4–5). Royal descent would also locate the prophet among the elite classes in Jerusalem, which might fit with the prophet’s somewhat specific critique of the “king’s sons” (1:8). The Peshitta attests a variant reading, wherein MT’s Hezekiah is read as Hilkiah. Hilkiah was the name of the father of Eliakim, overseer of King Hezekiah’s household (2 Kgs 18:18) and a priest under Josiah (2 Kgs 22:4). Ben Zvi (1991, 47–49) observes that Gedaliah, Amariah, and Hilkiah are all names of priests in the postexilic period and also notes that lists of three names ending in the theophoric element *-yah* and go-

ing back four or more generations are uncommon and found only in late texts (1991, 42; see 2 Chron 20:14; Bar 1:1; Tob 1:1).

Arguments for a later date of the book or later editing of its contents derive from the significant amount of intertextuality that connects Zephaniah to other biblical texts. Influences from Genesis (De Roche 1980; Berlin 1994, 13–14), Deuteronomy (Vlaardingerbroek 1999, 22–25; Berlin 1994, 14–15), Isaiah (Sweeney 2003, 16; O'Brien 2004, 61), Ezekiel (Stromberg 2008), Jeremiah (Holladay 2001), Wisdom, and Psalm traditions (Ben Zvi 1991; Floyd 2000) have all been observed. Discussions about Zephaniah's place within a Book of the Four and the Deuteronomistic tradition also impact discussions of date (Wöhrle 2008). As with any discussion of intertextuality, deciding the direction of dependence remains difficult, though Smith and Lacheman's (1950) Maccabean date is surely too late.

Canonically, Zephaniah is placed ninth in both the MT and LXX's ordering of the Book of the Twelve, following Nahum and Habakkuk and preceding Haggai. This, combined with the amount of intertextual references, suggests a date for the composition and editing of Zephaniah in the exilic period or slightly later, though it does not, of course, preclude the possibility that Zephaniah's prophetic activity took place earlier in the late pre-exilic period.

(p. 502) Key Themes

Judgement

The major theme in Zephaniah is Yahweh's coming judgement, which will fall on the entire world, including humans and animals (1:2–3), Judah and Jerusalem (1:4–14), the nations (2:1–15), and an anonymous city, presumably Jerusalem (3:1–8). Although the theme of judgement runs through the book, the way in which it is presented oscillates throughout. The target of judgement varies from broad (the whole world) to specific (Jerusalem), from named nations (Moab, Ammon, etc.) to an unnamed city. The reasons for the coming judgement also oscillate between seemingly specific accusations against Judah for illicit cultic practices (1:4–5; 3:4), illicit social activity (1:7–8; 3:7), and complacency located in wealth (1:10–13, 18) and vague proclamations of judgement on the nations. While Moab and Ammon are condemned for their pride and boasting against Judah (2:8–11), the crimes of Philistia (2:4–7), Cush (2:12), and Assyria (2:13–15) are not specified. The time of judgement also varies, at times appearing imminent (1:14) and at times seeming to be further away (3:8–9).

The bringer of judgement does not change, however; notably, in each instance Yahweh is the only active participant. Yahweh alone will bring an end to the inhabitants of the earth, drive out nations, and make cities desolate. No divine army is mentioned (cf. Joel 2), nor is any reference to Yahweh stirring up a human enemy to act against his people (cf. Isaiah 41:2).

The Day of Yahweh

The day of judgement in Zeph 1:7–18 is referred to as the Day of Yahweh, which will be manifest in darkness and gloom (1:15, cf. Amos 5:18; Joel 2:2), and wrath, anger, and anguish (1:15, 18; 2:3; 3:8 cf. Isa 13:7–9; Ezek 7:8). This day is introduced in 1:7, where the people are told to be silent before Yahweh. Such silence is connected to cultic activity (Vlaardingerbroek 1999, 82)—a theme which is developed as the Day of Yahweh is revealed to be a day of sacrifice, with Yahweh offering up his guests. The Day of Yahweh in Zephaniah is thus one of punishment and purification.

The Day of Yahweh is a theme found throughout numerous prophetic books, though the construct chain *yom adonai* overwhelmingly occurs within the Minor Prophets (Nogalski 2003, 193). As Vlaardingerbroek observes (1999, 80), although the ideas connected with the phrase changed over the centuries, there must have been a belief in ancient Israel that there would be a Day of Yahweh, as no texts refute the concept. Nogalski (2003) argues that a concept of the Day of Yahweh runs through Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah with numerous linguistic and thematic connections unifying these four texts. Slightly differently, Beck (2005) argues that the Day of Yahweh was an impor (p. 503) tant theme in the three books of Amos, Zephaniah, and Joel, which was then subsequently taken up in Zechariah and Malachi. Outside of the Minor Prophets, Sweeney (2003, 16) and O'Brien (2004, 61) both draw attention to connections between Zephaniah's Day of Yahweh and that found in Isaiah, especially Isa 13.

Although there are numerous points of similarity between all of the Day of Yahweh texts, Hoffman (1981, 39) rightly cautions that the concept may well have developed over time and may be different between earlier texts and later ones. It is difficult to state, therefore, whether Zephaniah's Day of Yahweh material was an original oracle of the prophet or a scribal addition influenced by a range of other prophetic texts. In some sense, both may be correct; Zephaniah may well have spoken of the impending Day of Yahweh, and this may also have been viewed as (or turned into) a unifying thematic feature by the collectors of the Minor Prophets and the editors of the Book of the Twelve.

Cult

Improper cultic activity undoubtedly results in judgement in Zephaniah, though the details of this illicit worship are not entirely clear. Zephaniah 1:4–6 rails against people bowing down on rooftops to the Host of Heaven (1:5a), swearing to Yahweh by their king (1:5b), and turning away from Yahweh (1:6). Due to the rooftop location, the Host of Heaven is often interpreted as astral deities, though rooftop worship in the ancient Near East was by no means limited to astral worship; thus, the Host of Heaven may be astral here, but it does not have to be. The main texts of *BHS, BHQ*, and *LXX* 1:5b all refer to swearing to Yahweh by *their king* (*malkam*). Some follow the Peshitta and the Lucianic Greek manuscripts, which read *malkam* as *milkom*, the name of the Ammonite deity seen especially in 1 Kgs 11:5; 2 Kg 23:13 (Stonehouse and Wade 1929, 33). Others repoint MT as *molekh*, referring to the deity connected with fire and child sacrifice elsewhere, for ex-

ample, Lev 20:1–5; 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35 (Berlin 1994, 76–78). These latter options have notable interpretive implications, as they connect the Zephaniah reference into Deuteronomistic ideas found especially in 1–2 Kgs and Jeremiah. Reading “their king,” however, is preferable since elsewhere Molech worship is connected to offering up children, which is absent here, and Milcom usually appears alongside Ashtoret of Sidon and Chemosh of Moab (e.g., 2 Kgs 23:13). Notably, those accused of these illicit cultic practices are described as the “remnant of Baal” and the *kemarim*, usually translated as “idolatrous priests.” *Kmr* is the Aramean term for a priest (Pietsch 2009, 225–255), suggesting that “swearing to Yahweh by their king” likely refers to foreigners practicing Yahwistic traditions but retaining foreign political allegiances (Irsigler 2002, 110). Zephaniah 1:9 also refers to people leaping “over the threshold,” which may be connected to worship of Dagon (1 Sam 5:5). Zephaniah 3:4 indicts the prophets for being faithless and the priests for profaning the sacred and doing violence to the law, though no specific information is provided as to what prompted the prophet’s accusations.

In contrast to the people’s improper cultic actions, Yahweh is presented as enacting cultic practices and upholding righteousness himself. Following the accusations of (p. 504) illicit cultic activity in 1:4–6, Yahweh in 1:7–8 is depicted preparing a sacrifice of his guests and punishing elites guilty of dressing in foreign attire and engaging in violence and corruption. Ironically, rather than be saved through a usual atoning guilt or sin offering, in 1:7–9 the guilty parties will become a sacrifice themselves. Zephaniah 3:5 takes a different tone but continues the contrast between the people and Yahweh seen in chapter 1. Following the accusations against the prophets and priests in 3:4, Yahweh is stated to be righteous, rendering his judgement “morning after morning, each dawn without fail” (3:5). The phrase “morning after morning,” or in some translations “every morning” (e.g., NRSV), is connected with cultic activity elsewhere (e.g., Exod 16:21; 30:7; 36:3; Lev 6:12 [Heb. 6:5]; Ezek 46:13, 14, 15). The language parallels the reliability of Yahweh with the reliability of the coming of dawn and evokes connections between Yahweh and the sun seen elsewhere in the biblical texts (e.g., Deut 33:2; Hab 3:4; Ps 84:12).

Corrupt Elites and the Humble Remnant

Zephaniah repeatedly criticizes the corrupt elite classes of Judah and Jerusalem, pronouncing judgement on the officials (1:8; 3:3), king’s sons (1:8), traders (1:11), the wealthy of Jerusalem (1:13), judges (3:3), priests (3:3), and prophets (3:3). In this it bears similarity to other prophetic critiques of society, especially Jer 2:26; 8:1–3, though Zephaniah does not critique the king but only his sons. If the superscription of the book does indeed link Zephaniah back to royal origins via Hezekiah or possible priestly origins via the Hilkiah reading (see earlier), then the prophet’s origins are among those he critiques. Zephaniah 1 warns that wealth will not save the people (1:13, 18), and the criticism leveled at these elite classes ranges from dressing in foreign attire (1:8), being complacent (1:12), not accepting Yahweh’s correction (3:7), and being proud (3:11). Other critiques are not so clear, however; Zephaniah 3:3 describes the officials as “roaring lions” and the judges as “wolves,” without further explication. Similar imagery occurs in Ezek 22:23–29, which refers to “roaring lions tearing the prey” (22:25), priests doing violence to the law

(22:26 cf. Zeph 3:4), and describes the judges as “wolves tearing the prey.” While Ezek 22 explicitly identifies the crimes of the officials, priests, prophets, judges, and people of the land as shedding blood, profaning holy things, dishonestly seeking personal gain, telling lies, and oppressing the poor, Zephaniah is less explicit about the crimes of the elites it addresses. For Zephaniah, what matters more than the specific crimes is the outcome: the punishment of these elites and the eventual creation of a humble remnant.

The theme of humility or a humble remnant occurs a few times (2:3; 3:11–12), with the nations also seemingly being punished for boastfulness and pride (2:8–10, 15). In 2:3 the “humble of the land” are defined as those who do Yahweh’s commands and are exhorted to seek humility so that they might be saved from the day of Yahweh’s wrath. Commanding the humble to seek humility is interesting and perhaps reminiscent of Proverbs’ idea that the wise seek wisdom (Prov 4:5–7). If the “humble” of Zephaniah are (p. 505) those who do Yahweh’s commands, however, then this raises the question of economic status: are the humble the economically poor, or are they other elites who follow Yahweh’s law correctly? Zephaniah notably lacks reference to the poor such as that found in Amos (2:6–7; 5:11–12; 8:4–6), so if the “humble” of 2:3 are elites who enact Yahweh’s law, then it is possible that the “proudly exulting ones” (3:11) are those elites taken into exile in 597 or 586 and the “people humble and lowly” (3:12) represent the people left behind.

The City

While Zeph 1:4 and 1:12 explicitly refer to Yahweh’s judgement coming on Jerusalem, 3:1–8 simply refers to “the city.” This city is presumably Jerusalem, as Yahweh is said to be in its midst (3:5), but the city remains unnamed. This lack of identification of the city may be merely the result of oracles spoken at different times being gathered together by the author of the book, though it is also somewhat reminiscent of Ezekiel’s “bloody city” (22, 24), which is identifiable by the sins committed in it and the wider context of the book. The contrast between the unnamed city in 3:1–8 and the triple nomenclature “Daughter Zion,” “Israel,” and “Daughter Jerusalem” in 3:14 is notable and clearly indicates a break between the two sections.

Redemption and Restoration

Although a major theme of the book is judgement, throughout there are moments of hope that culminate in a resounding statement of restoration in 3:14–20. Zephaniah 1 has no such hope for the inhabitants of the earth, but 2:5–7 promises that Judah will possess the coastal lands and cities and 2:8–9 states that Judah will plunder Moab and Ammon. Zephaniah 3:9–10 also sounds a note of hope, stating that “at that time” Yahweh will change the speech of the nations to call on his name and serve him (reminiscent of Gen 11) and will bring together those scattered beyond the rivers of Cush. The idea that Judah would benefit from the destruction of its neighbors in 2:4–15 is logical enough, but 1:2–18 and 3:1–8 do not seem to anticipate the proclamations of restoration in 3:9–10, 14–20, which indicates that these are likely a secondary theme (Hadjiev 2014, 508).

The major proclamation of restoration begins in 3:14 with a call to “Daughter Zion” to sing, Israel to shout, and “Daughter Jerusalem” to rejoice and exult. The appearance of such feminine language is unexpected—indeed, it is the first female imagery in the book—and is immediately reminiscent of Isaiah’s Daughter Zion (Isa 52:1–2, cf. 51:3, 11; Mic 4:13; Lam 1:6; 2:1, 10, 13, 18). O’Brien (2004, 85) notes the feminine imagery is immediately contrasted with highly masculine imagery depicting Yahweh as king (3:15) and warrior (3:17). The structure and imagery of the rest of the passage are also close to the (p. 506) enthronement Pss 47, 95, and 97 (Smith 1984, 143–144) and may have been influenced by psalmic traditions. The mention of Yahweh bringing people home (3:20) notably sits uneasily with a Josianic date, so if a seventh-century date is upheld for the core text, then this passage could be a later addition. Numerous scholars indeed do identify these verses as a postexilic addition (see Nogalski 1993, 201–202 n. 74), but it could technically date from any time where the Judean community was scattered, such as the aftermath of 701 when most of the Shephelah was destroyed, creating considerable displacement of the Judahites, or anytime from 597 onward (Isa 43:5–6; 48:20; 49:22).

Whatever its origin, 3:14–20 has the effect of ending the book of Zephaniah with a joyful declaration of hope and restoration. Although this stands in contrast to the judgement envisaged for the inhabitants of the whole earth in 1:2–18, it places Zephaniah alongside other books in the Twelve, notably Amos and Joel, which also end with proclamations of hope and restoration.

Zephaniah in the Hebrew Bible

The reader will realize by this point that Zephaniah shares a great deal of similarity with other biblical texts within and external to the Book of the Twelve. Beyond the numerous clear intertextual connections and allusions lie many questions about the transmission, redaction, and canonical preservation of the text. The interpretation of Zephaniah’s history and role within the Hebrew Bible is probably the biggest interpretive crux of the whole book.

The Book of the Four and the Deuteronomistic Question

Nogalski (1993) identifies connections between Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah that suggest that these four texts once formed part of a “Deuteronomistic” corpus that pre-existed the Book of the Twelve and were then editorially expanded to become part of the Twelve. He argues that Micah presupposed Hosea and Amos and that the early content of Zeph 1:1–3:8 functioned as a “Southern parallel to Amos” (Nogalski 1993, 276–280). Wöhrle (2008, 610–611) collates the passages Nogalski identifies as Deuteronomistic redactional additions and observes that they are thematically diverse, leaving the intention of the “Book of the Four” undefined. For Wöhrle, the additions to each of the Four books corresponds to the dates given in the superscriptions. He claims that additions to Amos and Hosea reflect the downfall of the northern kingdom seen in 2 Kgs 17, additions to Micah reflect 2 Kgs 17 and the reign (reform) of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18, and additions to

Zephaniah reflect Josiah's reign (reform) in 2 Kgs 22–23 but that all differ from the Kings material (Wöhrle 2008, 612–614; Albertz 2003, 251).

One of the key passages in Zephaniah often seen as reflecting Deuteronomistic influences is the rejection of cultic practices in 1:4–6, sometimes thought to be dependent on (p. 507) Josiah's reform in 2 Kgs 23. 2 Kings 23 also mentions the Host of Heaven (23:4, 5), Baal (23:4), and the *kemarim* (23:5). If *malkam* (Zeph 1:5) is translated as *milcom*, then it finds a parallel in 2 Kgs 23:13, yet there are notable differences: (1) 2 Kings 23:4–5 locates worship of the Host of Heaven in the temple and at the high places, not on rooftops (so Zeph 1:4–5); (2) the removal of Asherah worship—a major theme in 2 Kgs 23:4–6—is strikingly absent from Zephaniah 1:4–6; (3) and the reform in Zeph 1:4–6 comes from Yahweh, not from a king or a scroll (so 2 Kgs 22–23) despite the superscription's association of the book with Josiah. Hadjiev (2010, 326–328) also observes that there are no clear Deuteronomistic expressions within Zephaniah and the book contains many words and expressions which are not Deuteronomistic.

Albertz (2003, 250–251) agrees with the theory that there was a "Book of the Four" whose theology bears similarities to the Deuteronomist material but notes that the redactional additions are more closely connected to the language of Hosea. As the redactor of the Book of the Four seems to have known the Deuteronomistic material in 2 Kings and Jeremiah, Albertz (2003) and Wöhrle (2008) argue that the Book of the Four represents an exilic understanding contrary to the Deuteronomistic History. In contrast to the Deuteronomistic History, the Book of the Four does not call for the restoration of the pre-exilic social order; instead, Yahweh will be king (Zephaniah 3:15) and the humble remnant will live in the land. The Book of the Four hypothesis also has an impact on discussions of the date of Zephaniah, for if Zephaniah was part of a corpus edited in the exilic period, then at least part of its content is pre-exilic.

The Book of the Twelve

How the Book of the Four became part of the Book of the Twelve is a matter of debate. There were clearly a few smaller collections of prophetic texts that were edited together to create the Book of the Twelve, including the Book of the Four, Nahum-Habakkuk, and Haggai-Zech 1–8. How these were edited together and interlinked, however, is difficult to establish (see the overview in Nogalski 1993, 2–19). There is a clear connection between the Day of Yahweh passages, some connections between restoration passages (e.g., Zeph 3:19–20 and Mic 4:6–7), and Kessler (2016, 220–22) notes a possible "futility curse" in Hos 4:10//Micah 6:14 and Amos 5:11//Zeph 1:13.

The processes that produced the Book of the Twelve continue to provoke discussion, but notably Zephaniah's location between Nahum-Habakkuk and Haggai gives it a unique importance as it ends the pre-exilic period and precedes the exile. Zephaniah's message of judgement literarily leads to the exile, and its message of restoration is followed by the return and rebuilding of the temple seen in Haggai and Zechariah. In this context, Zephaniah's similarities with earlier prophetic books brings their content toward a new

literary and historical horizon, where previously proclaimed judgement would be fulfilled in the exile. Zephaniah's intertextual allusions to earlier books not only address the people of his time but serve to confirm the truth of his predecessors.

(p. 508) Reading Zephaniah

As a book, Zephaniah looks both backward and forward and uses traditions and ideas within and external to the prophets. Its superscription associates it with a literary context that may or may not be the same as the historical context that produced it, and its location within the Book of Twelve affords it another different literary context altogether. It is a written account of an earlier, spoken word of divine origins, preserved and transmitted by multiple people in multiple contexts. How then should we read it?

One answer lies in an appreciation of the constant external-internal dialectic found throughout the book. Zephaniah encourages the people to look around themselves, at those bowing down on rooftops (1:4–5), those dressing in foreign attire (1:8), those weighing out silver (1:11), and the prideful nations reveling in their boasting against Judah and in their own strength (2:9–15). Yet it also encourages internal reflection, warning readers to look within themselves and not say in their hearts that Yahweh would not bring harm (1:12), to seek humility (2:3), to accept correction (3:7), and to not be found among the "proud exultant ones" (3:11). Externally and internally, then, the book offers a model for behavior, and the internal dictates the external.

In addition, Zephaniah invites comparisons with numerous texts outside itself yet contains its own complete message of judgement and restoration. For millennia, readers have followed the paths to other texts mapped out in Zephaniah's intertextual allusions, learning more about the nature of prophecy and the biblical authors' understanding of Yahweh's interventions in human history as they do so. Zephaniah, interestingly, contains all this within itself, offering a microcosm of these ideas within its three short chapters. The effect of this external-internal dialectic is didactic, yet it is not simply didacticism: it is prophecy. The content of Zephaniah has a divine origin—"a word" spoken to the prophet, which should not be forgotten amid all the conversations about the textuality of the book. The book switches between Yahweh speaking, giving the reader an insight into the divine thought processes (2:8; 3:6–7), and the prophet, who describes Yahweh's actions externally from the standpoint of humanity. Between the external-internal dialectic, the reader sees that the message of the prophet and the mind of Yahweh are one. This has implications beyond Zephaniah, for the Book of the Twelve must then also be Yahweh's word.

Another way to read Zephaniah would be to emphasize the contrast between specificity and opaqueness throughout. Some specific references (e.g., 1:4–6; 2:13–15) locate the book in a historical context, offering background information and justification to the message of Zephaniah. Other references, however, are left vague, such as the city that will not accept correction (3:7), the proud exultant ones who will be removed (3:11), and the identity of the humble remnant (2:3; 3:12). The opaqueness of these references permits

the message of the book to transcend its historical content and be applicable to later readers.

(p. 509) Alternatively, Zephaniah can be read thematically, as a progression from judgement, to justice, and restoration. That this restoration is introduced with feminine language (3:14) also deserves intertextual attention. It is Daughter Zion, Israel, and Daughter Jerusalem that rejoice because Yahweh restores them. If Zephaniah is the last text of the Book of the Four, then Hosea's adulterous wife is redeemed and the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is restored.

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Haggai

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay offers an overview of the content and major critical issues related to the book of Haggai. In a series of dated oracles, the book reveals an ongoing internal dispute within the Yahwistic community in Judah concerning divine permission to rebuild the Jerusalem temple under Zerubbabel in the early Persian period. The prophetic oracles suggest that the basis for the dispute lay in differing interpretations of the poor socioeconomic circumstances the community faced at the time. Major themes of the book include the difficulty of determining the divine will, the role of the temple as mediator of divine presence, and the effects of divine presence on the community. A major area of critical interest in the book is its compositional history, particularly as it relates to the development of the "Book of the Twelve."

Keywords: Haggai, Persian period, Jerusalem temple, Zerubbabel, Yahwistic community

THE book of Haggai is the second shortest of the Minor Prophets, comprising two chapters and a total of thirty-eight verses. The entire book is devoted to a single topic, the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem in the early Persian period. Four prophetic oracles and two short narratives are embedded in a dating scheme that places speech and action within the months of August through December of 520 BCE. The oracles offer divine responses to various objections, either stated explicitly or implied, to the rebuilding of the temple at that time. These objections include a concern that it is "not the time to rebuild the house of YHWH," that the community lacks the resources necessary to adequately complete the project, and that under the Persians the Yahwists lack the expected royal builder of a temple for their patron deity. The first short narrative recounts the response of members of the Yehudite community to the initial oracle calling for reconstruction. The second narrative, often called the "priestly torah" section, is in fact a brief dialogue between the prophet and priests regarding the transmission of ritual impurity, a phenomenon the prophet asserts applies in some way to the current situation regarding the rebuilding of the temple. Altogether, the book gives evidence of a dispute within the

community regarding the propriety or feasibility of rebuilding the house of YHWH in the second year of the Persian king Darius.

The book begins with the first oracle, conveyed through Haggai to Zerubbabel, the governor of the Persian province of Yehud (or Judah), and to the high priest Joshua (1:1–11). This oracle, which is dated to "first day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king," is an extended announcement of divine displeasure that the temple has not been rebuilt. In response to the people's claim that it is not time to rebuild the temple, YHWH first accuses the people of selfishly looking after their own houses rather than his and then points out the agricultural and economic problems they currently face, exhorting them to begin building so as to please and glorify the deity, and finally informing them that the reason they are suffering agricultural problems (a severe drought) is precisely because they have ignored YHWH's house. Implied in this oracle, but never stated, is a promise that an effort to rebuild the temple will bring an end to the (p. 512) drought. Immediately, the narrator then reports, at least some of the Judahite community, including Zerubbabel and Joshua, responded to the prophetic call and within a month had set to work on YHWH's house.

Less than a month later, however, on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the prophet is told to deliver another oracle to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and "the remnant of the people" (2:1–9). This oracle acknowledges the estimation of at least some among the populace that, due to a lack of resources, the new temple seems "like nothing" compared to the former temple. The inability to adequately "glorify" YHWH's house may have raised concerns, once again, that it was not the time to rebuild. In response, YHWH exhorts the leaders and the people to "be strong … and work," assuring them of the divine presence. As for the lack of "silver and gold," YHWH will soon be providing for that by "shaking" the heavens and the earth and the nations, such that the new temple will be more glorious than its predecessor. Once YHWH's house is completed, the deity will give "peace" (*shalom*), a word that in this context points toward material welfare. In other words, YHWH will bring an end to the ongoing agricultural problems.

The final section of the book features the "priestly torah" dialogue with its associated oracle (2:10–14) and two more oracles (2:15–19; 20–23). All of these are delivered on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, two months after the previous oracle. Work on the temple has advanced enough to refound the temple on this date (2:18). In the "priestly torah" unit, the prophet inquires first if "consecrated meat" can transmit through touch its consecrated status to other food; no, he is told, it cannot. Haggai then asks if ritual defilement from a corpse can be transmitted by touch; yes, it can. In response to this, the prophet declares that in a similar way "this people—this nation" and "all the work of their hands" are defiled. This enigmatically allusive response, whose relevance to the surrounding material is not obvious, constitutes probably the only *crux interpretum* of Haggai (see later for further discussion). The next oracle (2:15–19) reminds the people that they were suffering before the reconstruction of the temple began and acknowledges that they are suffering still, but assures them that now, from the day of the refounding, YHWH will bless the people. This oracle can easily be seen as a response to ongoing concerns

that the temple reconstruction had not brought about the anticipated reversal of agricultural fortunes (as this takes place during the rainy season, we may presume the drought had not ended as expected).

The final oracle of the book is directed specifically to Zerubbabel. After a repetition of the earlier assurance (2:6) that YHWH would soon be "shaking the heavens and the earth," the prophet adds a further notice of the destruction of "the strength of the kingdoms of the nations." When this happens, Zerubbabel is assured, YHWH will take him ("my servant") and "make you as a signet ring, for it is you I have chosen." This final verse, with its allusions to the Davidic monarchy, points toward YHWH's recognition of Zerubbabel, a Davidide, as heir presumptive to the Davidic throne. In the context of the reconstruction of the temple, this implies his authority to serve as royal builder.

(p. 513) Outline of Haggai

I. Introduction to Dispute Regarding Temple (1:1–11)
- **A.** Date of Call to Announce Divine Displeasure (1:1)
- **B.** Announcement of Displeasure (1:2–4)
- **C.** Rehearsal of Economic and Agricultural Woes (1:5–8)
- **D.** Call to Rebuild (1:8)
- **E.** Woes Are Result of Divine Displeasure (1:9–11)

II. Initial Response to Call to Rebuild (1:12–15)
III. Reassurance of Divine Intention (2:1–9)
- **A.** Date of Call to Announce Reassurance (2:1–2)
- **B.** Divine Recognition of Poor Prospects and Oracles of Assurance (2:3–9)

IV. Prophetic Question and Oracle of Vilification (2:10–14)
V. Promise of Imminent Blessing (2:15–19)
- **A.** Reminder of Agricultural Problems (2:15–18a)
- **B.** Promise of Reversal upon Refounding of Temple (2:18b–19)

VI. Oracle to Zerubbabel (2:20–23)
- **A.** Divine Promise to Overthrow Kingdoms (2:20–22)
- **B.** Divine Choice of Zerubbabel as Servant and Signet (2:23)

Historical Context

The immediate historical setting of the book of Haggai is the sixth through the ninth months in the second year of the Persian king Darius I (August–December 520 BCE). According to the account in the book of Ezra, reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple began years earlier during the reign of Cyrus (538 BCE), immediately after the decree permitting the return of the exiles. This work was disrupted, however, and was not able to resume until 520 BCE. According to Ezra 6:15, the temple was finally completed in the sixth

year of Darius (516 BCE). Ezra, then, presents a picture in which the Yehudite community was eager to rebuild the temple but was prevented from doing so until Haggai and Zechariah successfully shepherded the project to completion. The book of Haggai, however, betrays no knowledge of any initial attempt to rebuild, nor does it acknowledge any outside factors that inhibited reconstruction in the time of the prophet. This fact, and the confused and contradictory account in Ezra, has raised suspicions about any reconstruction efforts before the reign of Darius. Both Haggai and Zechariah suggest, in fact, that no attempt was made to rebuild the temple until the time of these two prophets.

A number of reasons, both theological and socioeconomic, may have contributed to the reluctance or inability to begin reconstructing the temple until 520 BCE. From a (p. 514) theological perspective, no attempt could be made to rebuild the temple until it was absolutely clear that the deity had commanded or at least permitted it. The original temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians, according to the traditions inscribed in the Bible, at the command of YHWH for covenant infidelity. It would have been disastrous to begin reconstruction of that temple until YHWH had made it clear that the time of judgment inaugurated by the destruction of the temple had come to an end.

Prophetic traditions related to the restoration period all projected a period of prosperity, demographic increase, and some measure of national autonomy. None of these conditions pertained to the early Persian period; quite the opposite was the case. Apart from the obvious lack of political autonomy, archaeological evidence confirms that the lands of the former kingdom of Judah, including Jerusalem, remained sparsely populated and economically backward into the Hellenistic period. This evidence is supported by the books of Haggai and Zechariah, both of which feature oracles in which the deity promises prosperity in the future (see Zech 1:16–17; 2:1–5 [Heb. 2:5–9]; 8:4–16). Another theologically related objection to the rebuilding project would have been the lack of a royal builder. Ancient Near Eastern ideology understood temple building to be the responsibility and prerogative of monarchs. The absence of political autonomy and thus of a divinely designated royal builder in Jerusalem may have constituted *prima facie* evidence that YHWH was not ready for the temple to be rebuilt. The final oracle of Haggai appears to be the prophetic response—allusive perhaps for political reasons—to this objection.

The difficult socioeconomic circumstances would also have provided the Yehudites with reasons to delay reconstruction of the temple. The cost of reconstruction and later the upkeep of a large temple in Jerusalem, along with its staff, would have placed a significant burden on the struggling community, who needed all their resources to survive. For this reason, subsistence farmers would hardly have been able or willing to leave their farms to contribute physical labor to the reconstruction effort.

The historical, socioeconomic, and theological context of Haggai make it doubtful that the reasons for not rebuilding YHWH’s house could be reduced simply to “selfishness,” as implied in Hag 1:4 (“Is it time for you to dwell in your finished houses while this house is in ruins?”) and 1:9, a rhetorical claim that commentators have almost universally taken at face value. If selfishness had been the only reason for “ignoring” the temple, the prophet-

ic call to rebuild could be seen merely as a moral plea, to which the people could respond with repentance and a commitment to begin work, as suggested in 1:12–14. If, on the other hand, there were substantive theological and economic reasons for not rebuilding the temple at that time, we must suspect that those objections were not as easily overcome as commentators have assumed. Seen against this background, the various oracles of Haggai are readily seen as responses to considered objections and thus provide us with evidence of a more complex attitude toward the temple in the early Persian period than has been generally presumed. This observation invites further inquiry into the factors attending the reconstruction of the temple and the socioeconomic and other circumstances of early Persian-period Yehud.

(p. 515) Themes

The Temple, Divine Presence, and Blessing

Every element of the book of Haggai is related in some way to the reconstruction of the temple. Because of this complete focus on “stone and timber,” critics of the book in the not-too-distant past regularly characterized it as basely materialistic and lacking “spirituality,” as if Haggai thought that God was only concerned about the physical building. The message of the prophet, however, is not simply that YHWH wants the temple rebuilt. In Haggai, the state of the temple reflects the state of the relationship between YHWH and the community, which at the outset of the book is—like YHWH’s house—in disrepair and ruin. The initial oracle begins by accusing the people of deliberate neglect of YHWH’s house, currently desolate, in favor of their own homes, which are already finished (1:4). Later in the same oracle this disparity between the state of the temple and the people’s homes is restated. The problem, then, is not simply that the temple lies abandoned. According to the prophet, the failure to rebuild represents a lack of devotion and commitment to YHWH, the same sort of selfishness and lack of regard for the covenantal relationship that earlier prophets had criticized. For Haggai, the ruins of the temple represent the ruinous state of the relationship between YHWH and the community that still awaits its restoration—and the prophet appears to be wondering why it is so long delayed. The neglect of the temple is a symptom, then, of neglect of the deity. (As suggested earlier, reality was undoubtedly more complex than this, but this is nevertheless the position the prophet takes, and thus it constitutes a theme of the book.) The message of the prophet regarding the temple is just as “spiritual” as that of earlier prophets who were able to point to illicit worship or injustice as evidence of a deeper problem.

According to those same prophets, divine displeasure at human infidelity was expressed through agricultural disasters and the consequent economic woes, as it is in Haggai. The people are told explicitly that YHWH has brought drought upon the land because they have neglected the temple (1:9–11). The same oracle implies, without actually stating it, that these woes will be remedied once the people attend to the temple. Later YHWH makes this promise explicit: once the temple is rebuilt such that its new glory outshines that of the previous temple, “in this place I will give you peace (*shalom*)” (2:9). This

promise is reiterated in an oracle given on the day the temple is refounded: “From this day, I will bless you” (2:19). The close connection between the temple and divine blessing is, of course, a traditional aspect of ancient Near Eastern temple ideology that is well represented elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. In Haggai the blessing is not automatic; it is the benefit of divine pleasure at seeing the people recover (or find) their devotion and piety, expressed through the sacrifices of time and materials they will make to rebuild YHWH’s house.

While the temple will be the locus of divine presence, the prophet makes it clear that YHWH is already with the people, stirring up their efforts to rebuild and sustaining (p. 516) them when they become concerned about the quality of the finished product (1:13–14; 2:3–9). Despite the deity’s displeasure at the neglect of the temple, YHWH is fully present to the people: “My spirit stands in your midst; do not be afraid!” (2:5). The divine presence is not enabled by the reconstruction of the temple, as if YHWH remained aloof and absent until a suitable house had been built. Instead, it is the active presence of YHWH that assures the temple will be built in the first place. This emphasis on divine presence is so closely related to the temple and divine blessing that all three constitute a single reality in the book of Haggai. The thematic connection between the human effort to rebuild the temple and divine assurance of presence and blessing runs through most of the book of Haggai. As such, it contributes to the overall biblical message that human actions reflect the state of their relationship with the divine. Prophetic attention to the “materialistic” aspects of life presumes and ultimately focuses on deeper realities that underlie even “stone and timber.”

Divining YHWH’s Will

The book of Haggai is both the product and manifestation of the perennial problem of how to interpret the divine will. The socioeconomic situation at the beginning of the book—one of agricultural devastation and the concomitant economic woes—could have been interpreted in more than way. On the one hand, the prophet asserts that God has brought this devastation as punishment, or at least a warning, for failing to rebuild the temple. The rhetoric of the prophet does not allow for any other interpretation of the devastation, nor does it acknowledge any other motive for failing to reconstruct the temple apart from the selfishness of the people. But as noted earlier, the same agricultural and economic problems could have been interpreted—and very likely were interpreted—as the continuation of the judgment brought on Israel through the Babylonians earlier in the century. Archaeological evidence confirms that the former Judah was devastated at that time and had never recovered, such that situation described in Hag 1:5–6, 9–11 was not new. The failure of the community to thrive, even two decades after the defeat of Babylon and the return of at least some of the exiles, would readily have suggested that Israel remained under judgment. If this were the case, rebuilding the temple without a clear sign from the deity only would have exacerbated the problem. Given this, it would have been entirely reasonable for at least some Yehudites to question the reliability of Haggai’s claim to speak for YHWH and his insistence that God wanted the temple rebuilt. Any course of action would appear risky because, if the prophet were genuine, to ignore him would fur-

ther inflame the deity's displeasure. On the other hand, to heed a false prophet would invite the same response. Although on first reading 1:12–14 seems to suggest that the entire community did in fact trust the prophet, we would be justified in questioning this as historically implausible, given the circumstances.

In any case the oracles at 2:3–9 and 2:15–19 are clearly given in response to an ongoing or renewed anxiety about the correctness of rebuilding. In 2:3–9, the people seem to believe that the temple will not be adequately provided for because of the poverty of the (p. 517) community—once again raising the suspicion that YHWH is not in fact prepared to return to Jerusalem. The oracle attempts to lay this anxiety to rest by affirming that YHWH will provide the silver and gold from the temple by "shaking the nations." The triple imperative to "be strong," the exhortation to "fear not," and the assurance that God's spirit is in their midst are all calculated to calm the anxieties of a community that is unsure how to proceed. Once again, they must trust the prophet's interpretation of ambiguous circumstances. A third oracle (2:15–19) addresses the fact that several weeks after work has begun on the temple, conditions show no sign of improving, a reality that would also have contributed to concern about the validity of the project and of the prophet's authenticity. Throughout the book of Haggai, then, runs the problem of how to interpret signs that appear to signal divine anger and how to appease (or at least not aggravate) that anger. This anxiety about prophetic authority—manifested in other parts of the OT—is not alleviated but rather exacerbated under such circumstances. This seems to have been the historical reality that accounts for the bulk of Haggai, a strong possibility that has yet to have an impact on most commentaries on this book.

Critical Issues

Past Scholarship

Until the last two decades of the twentieth century, the book of Haggai was generally neglected by modern biblical scholars. Treatment was confined largely to standard commentaries on the Minor Prophets, many of which gave it minimal consideration. A few, sporadic articles attended to historical issues (Ackroyd 1951), exegetical puzzles (Cody 1964; Koch 1967), or redactional history (Mason 1977). Seldom of interest in itself, the book was often drawn into the study of larger issues related to the postexilic period. Scholars interested in the development of messianic expectations often included the oracle to Zerubbabel (2:20–23) in their considerations. Those exploring the sociological configuration of early Persian-period Yehud (Dumbrell 1978; Japhet 1983) or the convoluted historical issues raised by Ezra and Nehemiah (Galling 1964; Torrey 1970) sometimes mined the book for whatever meager light it could shed on these questions. Any study of the origins of the Second Temple itself naturally turned to Haggai for insight, but apart from offering what seemed to be a straightforward account of the prophet's oracles urging its reconstruction and what was accepted as the universal and enthusiastic acceptance of the call to rebuild, the short book yielded little further information.

This last observation accounts to a great extent for the tendency of scholars to ignore Haggai. The book was too short and too narrowly focused to offer much to the historian. It was coherent and apparently straightforward enough to garner only occasional attention from those seeking exegetical puzzles to solve. Especially those scholars interested in theological questions tended to ignore Haggai or outright dismiss it as "grossly (p. 518) materialistic" and "unspiritual" (Sellin 1922, 398), the man and the book hardly being worthy to be called "prophetic" (Oesterley and Robinson 1961, 408). From historical, exegetical, and theological perspectives, the book of Haggai seemed to offer little.

More recently Haggai's fortunes have begun to change for the better, with dramatic growth since 1980 of literature on the book and its historical context. One reason for this is the emerging and sustained interest in the Persian period among biblical scholars and archaeologists. The wealth of recent archaeological research, in particular, has contributed to our understanding of Persian-period Yehud and promises more of the same in the future (Carter 1999; Lipschits 2011). New information has led to the reconsideration of older positions regarding virtually every aspect of the period and of the biblical literature associated with it. Haggai has profited modestly from this upsurge of attention, while still failing to attract the same level of interest as Zechariah, Malachi, or Ezra-Nehemiah.

A survey of recent scholarship on Haggai reveals that some of the older questions remain unsettled and of moderate interest (Hildebrand 1989; Pfeil 1986). Whereas some earlier compositional theories appear to have been set aside, new and more complex models have begun to emerge as part of the larger study of the development of "the Book of the Twelve." Others have given thoughtful and detailed attention to the book's literary and rhetorical aspects (Assis 2007; Clark 1992; Kessler 2002). By raising new questions, offering alternative readings, and proposing fresh solutions to older problems, these investigations have revealed the depth and complexity of the second shortest book of the Minor Prophets. At the same time, they have opened up avenues of exploration into the sociohistorical background of the reconstruction of the temple and therefore of Persian-period Yehud, as the review of the historical context of the book (earlier) makes clear. Here we will discuss briefly two areas of emerging research: the compositional history of Haggai and rhetorical analysis of the book.

Compositional History

Broadly speaking, there are two schools of thought regarding the compositional history of the book of Haggai: the simple and the complex. The simple model, currently accepted by most scholars, understands the book to have reached its present form, or substantially so, shortly after the oracles are supposed to have been delivered (Kessler 2002; Meyers and Meyers 1987; Petersen 1984). The composition involved a single, comprehensive redaction in which the prophet's oracles were placed within a narrative framework, which comprises the dating formulae (1:1; 2:1, 10, 20) and various narrative elements not part of the oracles themselves (1:3, 12–13a, 14–15; 2:2, 21a). It is widely agreed that verse 2:5a,

which does not appear in the Greek translation (the Septuagint) but does appear in subsequent witnesses, is a later addition.

In the early twentieth century there arose a variation of this basic model that sought to explain an oddity of the dating scheme at 1:15–2:1a, as it is found in the Masoretic Text (MT). The text runs (without punctuation): "[1:15] On the twenty-fourth day of the (p. 519) month in the sixth [one] in the second year of Darius the king [2:1a] in the seventh month on the twenty-first day of the month …" Two day/month notices on either side of a single year notice, with no oracular or narrative material between them, seems to suggest textual corruption. This supposition is supported by the Leningrad and Cairo codices, as well as the Dead Sea text of Haggai (Murabba'at 88), all of which separate 1:15 from the preceding narrative material with a *petuḥa*. According to these witnesses, 1:15 begins a new section with the dating formula: "On the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth one, in the second year of Darius the king … ," which is followed by no oracles or narrative associated with it.

Whereas Sellin (1905) suggested some material had simply fallen out of the text, Rothstein argued that the "missing text" was in fact to be found at what is now 2:15–19, a text that appeared to him to be missing a dating scheme, since it begins a new oracle and is, according to Rothstein, unconnected with the "priestly torah" portion immediately preceding it. Rothstein concluded that 2:15–19 should be returned to its proper place after 1:15, and he commented on the book according to this emendation (1908, 53–56). For much of the twentieth century many scholars accepted not only the reorganization of the book but also wrote standard commentaries on the text as emended rather than on the canonical (MT) form (Chary 1969; Horst 1954; Wolff 1988). Recent commentaries on Haggai have rejected or ignored this emendation, of which there are no textual witnesses (Jacobs 2017; Meyers and Meyers 1987; Petersen 1984).

Recently some scholars have challenged the simple compositional model in which preexisting oracles were incorporated into a narrative framework in a single redaction, resulting in what was substantially the final form of the book. Two scholars in particular, Jakob Wöhrle and Martin Hallaschka, have presented arguments for an incremental process of textual growth in which various portions of the text were added throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods as part of the formation of the Book of the Twelve. Although they differ somewhat regarding details, both Hallaschka and Wöhrle claim, for example, that the oracles featuring YHWH "shaking the nations" (2:6–9, 20–23) were not original to the prophet or the initial redaction. Wöhrle suggests both were added simultaneously around 400 BCE (2008, 161–163); Hallaschka places 2:6–9 around the middle of the fifth century BCE and 2:20–23 later, in the Hellenistic period (2011, 117–118). Their arguments rest on the assumption that the material related to the "shaking of the nations" and cosmic upheaval is foreign to the main concerns of the book as a whole, which they see as largely confined to agrarian matters.

This assumption, however, fails to take into account the close relationship that both the agrarian matters and the "shaking of the nations" sections have to the question of the re-

construction of the temple. The agrarian concerns are the symptoms of divine anger at the failure to rebuild. The “shaking the nations” sections address objections to the reconstruction, namely the lack of resources and the lack of a royal builder. The two topics are both integral to the overall, coherent argument of the book and are not recognizably foreign in tone or content. On similar grounds, which are equally problematic, they have argued that the “priestly torah” section (2:10–14) is a later addition that has nothing to (p. 520) do with the temple. In its current position, however, the “priestly torah” section is in fact closely tied to the question of the reconstruction of the temple, although in precisely what way has been a subject of debate.

Although the work of these scholars is detailed and impressive, their arguments that key elements of the book of Haggai do not cohere with the rest of the book have not yet overturned the simple compositional model. It remains to be seen if others present additional arguments in favor of a multistage redaction of the book over several centuries, or if the long-standing hypothesis of a single comprehensive redaction in the late sixth century will stand. The question of the relationship of Haggai to the rest of the Minor Prophets, or to the Book of the Twelve, is discussed in a later section.

Rhetorical Criticism

Rhetorical analysis of biblical literature is a relatively new approach, at least in the modern era, having been first promoted in the guild of biblical scholars by James Muilenburg in 1968. Since that time, while most biblical books have been subjected to extensive rhetorical analysis of various forms, Haggai has only recently received similar attention. As late as 1995, only three scholars had produced explicitly rhetorical studies of the book, two short articles by Clark (1992) and Holbrook (1995) on discourse analysis and a monograph by Bauer (1992) that incorporated rhetorical analysis in a larger study of socioeconomic themes in Haggai-Malachi. Since then, a handful of shorter studies have used rhetorical analysis to address questions of structure and compositional unity (Boda 2000; Assis 2007). All of these analyses are concerned with the text itself, without reference to the historical circumstances behind the text or to the relationship of the argumentation of the text to that historical context.

More recent studies of Haggai have been examining the argumentation within the book in relation to its historical circumstances. Wendland (2005, 2006) began by looking at the rhetorical situation that prompted Haggai to preach, examining in some detail the argument of the book as a response to the historical realities behind it. In the first monograph-length treatment of Haggai that featured rhetorical analysis, Kessler (2002) analyzed the book to determine what its literary features might reveal about the social environment of early Persian-period Yehud. Most recently, Barker (2017) undertook a detailed rhetorical analysis of the entire book as an artifact of a policy dispute regarding the temple, arguing that its argumentative strategies reveal a contentious and somewhat protracted debate within Yehudite society over the propriety of its reconstruction in 520 BCE. These studies have taken seriously the fact that Haggai’s speeches and the book itself were persuasive speech designed to influence the thought and behavior of an histori-

cal audience. Rhetorical analysis undertaken in this light has thus contributed to the growing scholarship of the early Persian period among biblicists. While these studies make clear the historical (and theological) value of rhetorical analysis of Haggai, their relative scarcity suggests the need for further work.

(p. 521) Connections with Zechariah 1–8 and the Book of the Twelve

It is universally recognized that the book of Haggai is closely related to Zech 1–8 in content, historical context, and form. Such observations have led some scholars to suggest that they were conceived as a single composition or a "composite work," a thesis most extensively argued by Meyers and Meyers (1987). Thematically, these materials share a concern with the temple and with the political and cultic life of the reconstituted community overall. The high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel feature prominently in both, with the latter closely associated in both texts with the temple reconstruction. As with Haggai, behind Zech 1–8 there is a concern to address the failure to thrive in the postexilic period, manifest both in assurances of imminent divine blessing and the blaming of the current dismal situation on ongoing infidelity or inattention to God. Literary connections are most clearly seen in Zech 8:9–13, which echoes the language of Hag 1:6 and 2:15–16 (references to the miserable existence before the foundations of the temple were laid); Hag 2:9,19 (promises of imminent agricultural abundance and *shalom*); and Hag 2:4–5 (the dual command to strengthen hands and to fear not).

Formally, the two texts have in common a dating scheme in their respective redactional frameworks that refers to the days and months of the oracles given in a specific year of the reign of Darius (Hag 1:1; 1:15–2:1; 2:10; Zech 1:1, 7; 7:1). The dates of the oracles overlap, such that the first dated oracle of Zechariah takes place in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, which is between the dates given at Hag 2:1 and 2:10, 20. This overlapping, along with the almost total similarity of dating notices, strengthens the argument that the two now-separate texts were originally united in a single redactional framework from the same hand. Meyers and Meyers have also noted that the closest links between the two texts are between Haggai and Zechariah 7–8, arguing that the latter was deliberately composed as an *inclusio* with Haggai as part of formation of the composite work (1987, lx–lxii). In his recent commentary on Zechariah, Boda has suggested that Haggai was originally a single work that was later "fused" with Zech 1–8 during the latter's redaction (2016, 30).

Although it is impossible at this point to know, it is likely that Haggai was originally a single composition, independent of at least Zech 1–6. The work has a focus and a clear structural and rhetorical integrity independent of Zechariah. Indeed, the latter work attends to a number of issues completely absent in Haggai, making it likely that at least Zech 1–6 was also originally independent. It is nearly universally assumed by scholars that the two texts eventually came to be seen as a single work, and arguments are strong that Zech 7–8 was added for thematic coherence. Those who argue for a redactional entity called the

Book of the Twelve are in agreement that this single work existed independently before being incorporated into this emerging work (Nogalski 1993; Schart 1998). With the notable exceptions of Hallaschka and Wöhrle (see earlier), most (p. 522) models of the formation of the Book of the Twelve have not featured significant development of Haggai as part of its inclusion. This means that at the present time studies of the connection between Haggai and the Minor Prophets have been confined largely to its relationship to Zech 1–8.

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Zechariah

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay discusses the origin of the book of Zechariah, its location near the end of the Minor Prophets, and the significance of that location. Zechariah depicts an upturn in the fortunes of postexilic Jerusalem, first with returnees from Babylon ca. 520 BCE (chaps. 1–8). Chapters 9–14 were added incrementally: chapter 10 in the early fifth century, and chapters 11–14 throughout the rest of the fifth century. Zechariah 2–8 unpacks the cosmological significance of the rebuilding of the temple. Chapters 9–11 threaten surrounding little nations that might harm the temple, and chapters 12–13 predict an upturn of fortunes for Jerusalem. Finally, chapter 14 portrays God as the protector of the returnees against all peoples who did not come to Jerusalem to worship God. In summary, Zechariah announces the need for Judah to repent from its sins, anticipates Jerusalem's restitution, and counsels complete dependence on God instead of an army.

Keywords: temple, exile, restitution, repentance, postexilic

(p. 525) ZECHARIAH 1:1 identifies the book's namesake as a prophet, the son of a man named Berechiah and the grandson of a man named Iddo, who may have been the priest named as a returnee from Babylon mentioned in Neh 12:4 and 16. Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, by contrast, name Iddo himself as Zechariah's father. Given that the book of Ezra–Nehemiah reached completion no earlier than about 321 and perhaps not until the third century (see Redditt 2014, 32), one would probably do well to follow the book of Zechariah itself on this detail about the prophet.

The book of Zechariah is the eleventh book in the Minor Prophets, and its position in the Twelve is significant. Hosea and Amos deal extensively with northern Israel, while Joel (conspicuously containing no dates or identifiable kings but possibly arising in the late monarchic period) stands between them and contrasts the futures of fallen Israel and surviving Judah. Obadiah, written about the time of the fall of Jerusalem, predicts divine judgment on the neighboring country of Edom, while both Jonah and Nahum castigate Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Between those two books stands Micah, which condemns both Judah and Israel, the latter of which fell to the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III in

723. The book of Jonah seems to be a postexilic narrative (possibly fifth or fourth century) but is set during the period of the Assyrian revival (ended 605), while Nahum (apparently written after the fall of Nineveh in 663) calls itself an “oracle” (i.e., a message directly from God) that the prophet foresaw concerning the Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, namely its total destruction. Nahum is followed by Habakkuk, which rails against the violence of the Babylonians, who succeeded Assyria as the dominant power in Mesopotamia; the two books share a common opening, which might suggest a shared literary origin. Zephaniah marks a change in focus in that it takes dead aim on Jerusalem and Judah (though mentioning other people as well).

Finally, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi speak to postexilic Judah, with both Haggai and Zechariah expressing hope for Zerubbabel, the Davidide who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra and who rebuilt the altar at the site of the destroyed temple (Ezra 3:2). In chapters 1–8, Zechariah addresses returnees from Babylon who had begun rebuilding houses in which to live. Chapters 9–11 threaten surrounding little nations, and chapters 12–14 (p. 526) predict an upturn of fortunes for Jerusalem. Lengthwise the book of Zechariah itself is about the same as the book of Hosea, those two being the longest of the Minor Prophets. Following Zechariah, the last book, Malachi, emphasizes tithing and justice. It condemns insincere worship and the failure to offer proper sacrifices at the restored temple.

The Book’s Content and Dating

Three verses in Zech 1–8 provide dates for the prophet’s words: the eighth month of the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia (520 BCE; 1:2), the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month of the same year (1:7), and the fourth day of the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius or 518 (7:1). The location in view in chapters 1–8 is clearly Jerusalem, and the subject matter of the entire book is God’s restoration of that city through a series of actions that would raise it and postexilic Judah to new heights in power among the nations.

Zechariah 9–14, by contrast, supplies no date(s) for its origin and never mentions Zechariah. These chapters drop the use of first-person verbs for the prophet; while 11:4–17 does employ the first-person singular, those verses constitute a metaphor rather than an autobiographical account. Instead, it is God that speaks in the first person in chapter 9 (vv. 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13), chapter 10 (vv. 3 and 5–12), chapter 11 (v. 13 and 16–17), chapter 12 (seven times, though in a third person narrative about God), chapter 13 (v. 2), and chapter 14 (v. 2).

Content-wise, Zech 9–14 clearly diverges from Zech 1–8. Zechariah 1–8 unpacks the cosmological significance of the rebuilding of the temple, while Zech 9–14 (especially chap. 14) focuses more on the nature of Judah’s future (see O’Brien, 2004, 232). These six chapters contain a series of predictions about the fortunes of postexilic Jerusalem and Judah, mentioning Greece (the enemy of Persia) in 9:13. Also threatened are Damascus (the main city in Syria), as well as Tyre and Sidon (Phoenician port cities), and three of the

five Philistine cities: Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron. Since a rebellion by Ashdod in 713–711 had been crushed by Assyria, and Gath seems to have been destroyed at the same time (Rainey 1982, 411; Wolters 2014, 271), this list of Philistine cities likely reflects the time of the Persian empire, which Cyrus began in 539–530 and which Alexander ended in 330 BCE. Because Greece itself is threatened in 9:13 but is not portrayed as the successor conqueror to Persia, and Zech 9–14 seems to have been produced later than chapters 1–8, perhaps in the early to mid-fourth century.

Within Zech 9–14, inconsistencies and shifts appear as well. Zechariah 9–10 identifies itself as "an oracle," which likely includes 11:1–3. Zechariah 11:4–17 constitutes a parable about the "flock doomed to slaughter" (Judah), yet 12:1–13:1 predicts a future unsuccessful attack on Jerusalem, followed in 13:2–9 by a promise by God to cleanse the land and its rightful people. Zechariah 14, a positive prophetic saying, describes a gathering of the nations to attack Judah but promises that God will defeat those nations in a spectacular reversal of Jerusalem's fortune and place in the world and also a renewal of the land and (p. 527) nation of Israel. Given these inconsistencies, scholars sometimes call chapters 1–8 "First Zechariah," chapters 9–11 "Second Zechariah," and chapters 12–14 "Third Zechariah" (contra Petterson 2000, 92–96).

First Zechariah itself may well derive not from Zechariah but from some time later and perhaps from several different hands, since the chapters draw on pre-exilic Amos, Joel, and Hosea as well as postexilic Malachi (perhaps to be dated in the mid- to late fifth century) and allude to priestly traditions in Exodus. Certainty is not possible, but chapter 9 may well fit the late sixth century, chapter 10 the early fifth century, and chapters 11–14 the last part of the fifth century (see Redditt 2012, 28–29).

A wide range of scholarship on Zechariah explores various dimensions of the book. These include literary analysis (Boda and Floyd 2001, 2008; Conrad 1999; Love 1999; Stead 2009); historical dimensions (Finitsis 2001; Meyers and Meyers 1987, 1993; Person 1993; Tiemeyer 2016); topical treatments (Rose 2009); and general discussions (Nogalski 2011).

Themes

The book of Zechariah articulates a number of themes of note. Some themes run throughout the book, while others are confined to particular chapters.

Repentance

Zechariah stresses the need for the postexilic community in Judah to repent of (and not repeat) the sins of their pre-exilic ancestors (1:4). Those sins include but are not limited to worshipping gods other than YHWH and—according to the authors of Deut 12, 1–2 Kgs, and 2 Chron—worshiping YHWH outside of Jerusalem after Solomon (who ascended the throne ca. 968 BCE) built the temple. Zechariah's Judean addressees had paid severely for their sins when God sent their ancestors into exile in Babylon in 598 and 587.

Mercy

The theme of God's future mercy on Jerusalem appears already in 1:12–17. Zechariah asks God bluntly, "[H]ow long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem?," which lay in ruins after Babylon destroyed it in 586. The prophet's complaint next appeals to the centuries-long covenantal relationship between God and the children of Abraham. Zechariah does not overtly accuse God of not keeping God's end of the bargain, given his awareness of prophetic condemnations of the city from the eighth century on (e.g., 2 Kgs 19:2–30; 21:12 and the frequent critiques of Jerusalem by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, (p. 528) Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.) In these verses, however, Zechariah holds God to God's end of the covenant (see God's covenants with the patriarchs in Gen 12:1–3; 15:1–16; 17:1–14; 26:1–5; and 28:10–17). The prophet maintains that seventy years of exile have been enough to atone for the sins of pre-exilic Jerusalemites.

Punishment of the Nations

The third theme flows directly from the second: God is about to punish the nations (unnamed) that did not assist Judah when its inhabitants were sent into exile in Babylon (Egypt will be blamed later and might be included here, but this critique seems to be leveled at Judah's neighbors in general). God calls Judah the apple of God's eye (2:8 [Heb. 2:12]) and commands the exiles to flee from Babylon, promising that they will again dwell in the midst of the "holy land" of Judah (2:12 [Heb. 2:16]), a valuation of Jerusalem and Judah *not* shared by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. Zechariah apparently has a message of hope for Judah only: there is no mention of northern Israel until 8:13, and 11:14 specifically declares the family ties between Israel and Judah dead.

Restoration

Not surprisingly, therefore, Zechariah predicts the restoration of Jerusalem. A Judah without Jerusalem had been rendered inconceivable after Solomon built the temple there. The city served as both the religious and political capital of pre-exilic Judah and in postexilic Judah (see also Neh 3:1–8:18). In 2:5, Zechariah reports that a man with a measuring rod is going to Jerusalem to measure its length and width. Ezekiel 40–44, which dates itself ca. 561, is a much longer vision/description of the new Jerusalem, although it is difficult to say whether Zechariah was influenced by Ezekiel. Just as the authors of 1–2 Kgs and of 2 Chron recognized no other sanctuary in Israel or Judah as a legitimate place to offer sacrifices to God, Zechariah allows no other sanctuary in postexilic Judah.

Return

The theme of the return of some of the exiles from Babylon appears twice, the first time in 2:6–12 [Heb. 2:10–16] in an address from God to the exiles in Babylon via the prophet, urging them to return to Judah. The second appearance is in 10:6–17 in a word of comfort from God to the houses of Judah (mentioned first) and Joseph, namely to strengthen Ju-

dah and to save Joseph. Judah was the tribe to which David and his successors belonged, and the name here presumably included also the southernmost tribe of Simeon, which had long since been swallowed up by Judah. Zechariah 10:10 speaks of God's bringing God's people from Egypt (possibly Judeans who had fled to Egypt dur (p. 529) ing Judah's battles against Babylon) and from Assyria (apparently a reference to the defeat and the taking into exile of people from northern Israel by King Shalmaneser of Assyria in 722).

The High Priest

The cleansing and restoration of the high priest Joshua appears in 3:1–7. The narrative opens with Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD and "the satan" (i.e., "the Tempter"), in this passage a being in God's divine council whose task it is to test humans. First, the angel commands someone (presumably other members of the council) to remove the priest's "filthy garments," that is, robes contaminated ritually by the priest's life in exile and perhaps by various kinds of moral and/or other ritual misconduct as well. Next, the angel orders an unidentified group (priests? angels?) standing nearby to clothe Joshua with "festal apparel" (appropriate priestly garments), topped with a turban (the traditional head gear of the high priest). Cleansed and robed, he is now ready to carry out his duties.

Temple Rebuilding

Zechariah 3:8–10 and 4:8–10a introduce the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The LORD promises to send a servant called the "Branch," a member of the family of David, to rule in Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple. Since Zerubbabel is the Davidide mentioned by name in 4:9–10a, it is safe to assume that Zerubbabel is the Branch anticipated in 3:8–10 as well. Thus far, then, Zechariah has foreseen a Tempter functioning in the divine council (3:1), a high priest conducting sacrifices at the altar in Jerusalem (3:3–7), and a renewed Davidic monarch ruling over a ritually cleansed city and an agriculturally renewed Judah.

In 6:9–14, the prophet is told to have a craftsman named Josiah ben (i.e., son of) Zephaniah make a crown for the head of the high priest. One might have expected a crown to be made for the future Davidic king, and hence some scholars suggest that an original reference to a king was modified to read "high priest" after no Davidic king materialized. Regardless, the focus of the book of Zechariah is Jerusalem, and the prediction in 4:9–10a that the hands of Zerubbabel have begun and will finish rebuilding the temple marks the book's theological high point. (That reconstruction project is also the main subject of the book of Haggai; see Hag 2:1–9.) The prediction in 6:9–14 presupposes that work on the temple has already begun, indicating a passage of at least some time between this passage and the sayings of God in 4:7–8. Also in 4: 9–10a Zechariah learns through a word of the LORD (found in 13:2–9, 14:1–5, 12–19) that Zerubbabel has "founded" the new temple, incorporating a special brick in its foundation (see Boda 2016, 301) rather like a "cornerstone" in modern American public buildings. Furthermore, Zerubbabel has already begun the actual task of reconstructing (p. 530) the temple (indicated by the mention of the

plummet in Zerubbabel's hand); its completion will prove the accuracy of Zechariah's message—and thereby validate him as a prophet.

The message continues in 4:10b–14 first by mentioning the seven eyes of the LORD that range throughout the whole earth. The number seven was a significant, even sacred, number connoting completeness or fullness and was depicted visually in the *menora* or lampstand. Since the seven eyes are said "to range through the whole earth," they indicate that God sees all that happens worldwide.

Baffled by what he is viewing, Zechariah inquires about two branches of the two olive trees that—like spouts—are pouring out a liquid through two golden pipes (v. 12). The MT says they were pouring out "gold," though both the RSV and the NRSV emend the text to read "oil." Obviously oil can be poured, but so can gold when it is panned, so it is not clear that an emendation is needed. Finally, Zechariah asks again about the two branches of olive trees, specifying that one is at the right hand and the other at the left hand of the lampstand. The angel replies that they represent "the two appointed ones who stand beside the LORD of the whole earth." The lampstand clearly represents the God of Israel, and the branches of an olive tree very likely represent Joshua and Zerubbabel.

Expulsion of Sinners

Zechariah 5:1–11 concerns the expulsion of sinners among those wanting to worship in the temple. The context for this theme is a vision of a scroll twenty cubits (ca. thirty feet) in length by ten cubits (ca. fifteen feet) in width flying about over Judah. The length would be about the maximum for a standard scroll, but the normal width of a scroll is much narrower—perhaps a foot or so wide. The large size of the scroll suggests that it is loaded with information, as does the fact that the scroll contains writing on both its front and back. The use of the passive tense suggests that God keeps the records, a possibility rendered more likely by the statement that God has sent out the scroll for a purpose: to identify and destroy worshippers who take oaths in God's name and do not keep their vows. This scene clearly depicts God anthropomorphically.

In v. 6, Zechariah sees an *ephah*, a unit of measure a little smaller than a modern-day bushel. The NRSV translates the word "basket," since the container has a lid. The next sentence is difficult. The NRSV reads, "This is their iniquity," following the LXX and the Syriac translation, while the MT reads "This is their eye." Following the MT, the ASV and the NIV plausibly suggest, "This is their appearance." Regardless of translation, when the leaden cover for the basket is lifted, observers see a woman who personifies wickedness. Readers will want to avoid reading sexism into the text. The Hebrew word for "wickedness" is feminine in gender, so wickedness is depicted as a woman. Similarly, modern Americans speak of "Father Time" and "Mother Earth." The two women who appear next are angels. They take the basket of wickedness to Babylon and place it in its own temple.

(p. 531) Explaining Jerusalem’s Fall

Zechariah 7:1–14 is crucial, explaining the fall of Jerusalem. The exiles in Babylon were abysmally aware that a pagan nation had defeated Judah and destroyed Jerusalem, including its temple. Even though the patriarchs had built altars for offering sacrifices to God and 1 Sam 1:9, 3:3, and 3:2–4:1 describe “the temple of the LORD” at Shiloh, people in Judah eventually came to consider the Jerusalem temple as the only legitimate place to sacrifice, a conviction that stands at the heart of the late seventh-century book of Deuteronomy (see 12:1–7). By contrast the eighth-century northern prophets Hosea and Amos railed against the sins (especially the idolatry) of Israel, but neither of them demanded that the people of northern Israel journey to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices; neither did their Judean contemporary Isaiah. The contemporary prophet Micah anticipated the coming of many nations to worship God, but the late seventh-early sixth-century prophet Jeremiah looked back on the fall of the kingdom of Israel and anticipated the fall of Jerusalem, blaming that city itself for its demise. With sin and punishing defeat now behind them, Zechariah tells his audience of returnees to look for a new day.

Restoration of Jerusalem

Zechariah 8:1–23 offers a detailed prescription for the restoration of Jerusalem. The Babylonians had left pre-exilic Jerusalem in ruins, but Zechariah foresees a new city. Verse two describes God’s reaction to the city’s destruction at the hands of the Babylonian army: jealousy and wrath. Though the city has been sinful and deserving of its punishment, God still loves it; God promises to return to Zion and dwell there again, turning it into a faithful city. As a result, a wiser population will live long life spans, so long that senior citizens will need walking canes. The inhabitants will again bear many children, a sign of God’s blessing as well as a necessity for the city’s population to grow. The city’s scattered population will return. All those new inhabitants will be God’s people, and God will be their God. Moreover, God will bring them peace by setting the surrounding nations against each other in battle. God will restore the fertility of the soil so that vines will produce grapes for wine and other kinds of produce. The dew will moisten the ground, yielding sufficient produce to feed the people of Jerusalem and postexilic Judah. The people of pre-exilic Judah and Israel, who had been the objects of subjugation/exile and hence derision, will be brought home by God to experience new, paradisiacal living conditions. With God residing in the temple again, the city itself will be so safe from foreign invaders that children can play in its streets without fear.

Closely connected to the city’s restoration is God’s future protection, a theme taken up in 12:1–14:21. Those chapters look beyond the restitution of the temple and anticipate a rebuilt city (though not necessarily a large one) that future enemies will besiege without success due to God’s strengthening of its warriors. The surrounding clans of Judah likewise will reap benefits from the city rather than just support it with taxes and soldiers (12:1–9). God will open a fountain to cleanse the house of David and the people of Jerusalem (13:1) and remove all vestiges of idolatry and false prophecy (13:2–6).

(p. 532) The Davidic Monarchy

Zechariah envisions the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. That monarch will be triumphant and victorious, on the one hand, yet humble, on the other. He can and will eliminate warfare, both in Ephraim (in the former northern kingdom) and in Jerusalem (i.e., the southern kingdom of Judah). A king must have subjects, of course, so God will return the exiles in Babylon to Judah. In addition, Zech 10 anticipates the return of all other exiles from Assyria and Egypt to the reunited Judah and Israel, where they will obey God's commands and prosper. Equally important, however, God—the real king of Judah—will protect those subjects from foreign invasion and make their land fertile (9:14–17).

Worthless Shepherds

Zechariah 10:1–12 discusses the failure of a number of worthless shepherds (10:1–2), their punishment, and their replacement by yet another worthless shepherd. God expresses disgust with Israel's shepherds and male goats (10:3). The NRSV translates the latter term "leaders" rather than "goats," clarifying the meaning while missing the parallelism between the two phrases and the sarcasm inherent in the epithet "goats." By contrast, Judah's real leader/shepherd is God, who with divine mercy will make Judah strong, like the divinity's own war horse.

Similarly, in 11:4–6 God announces divine displeasure with the leaders of God's flock (the house of Judah). Judah's leaders have been taking advantage of their position and power to squeeze money out of the residents of Jerusalem/Judah. The verses cite no specifics, but the amount the priests charged and their self-satisfaction for their services must have been very high. Other leaders also perhaps taxed the people too heavily.

Zechariah 11:7–17 constitutes what has been termed a "sign-enactment report," a genre in which a prophet's actions symbolizes all or (as in this case) part of his message. The action here is metaphorical. The narrator becomes a shepherd employed by sheep merchants (the leaders of God's flock) to make money at the expense of that flock. He takes two staffs to carry out his new job—one named "Favor" (of God) and the other "Unity" (of Israel and Judah). Both staffs are broken; the reunification of Israel and Judah after more than 350 years of division has not yet come about. According to the author, God will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land (NRSV translates "earth," but the word "land" [i.e., both Judah and Israel] fits the context better), and thus the narrator himself becomes the shepherd of "the flock doomed to slaughter"

The narrator disposes of "the three shepherds" (v. 8), perhaps the indigenous religious leadership of fifth-century Judah under the control of persons serving the interests of the Persians (Redditt 2012, 83). By this act he annuls the covenant made "with all the peoples," that is, with the people of both Judah and Israel. In v. 9 the narrator renounces his role as shepherd and in v. 10 breaks his staffs, an act the sheep merchants recognize as the word of God (v. 11). In vv. 12–14 the narrator asks for his wages and receives thirty shekels of (p. 533) silver, the amount in Exod 21:32 to be paid as restitution to a family when an ox gored one of its members to death. Surprisingly in v. 15 God again directs the

narrator to “take once more the implements of a worthless shepherd,” that is, one who fails to protect his flock. This shepherd symbolizes any official in Judah who was unable to protect its people.

Reestablishing Life on the Land

The establishment of ideal living conditions in Israel appears in 10:4–12; 13:1, and 14:6–11, 20–21. The first of these texts (10:4–12) is bellicose, elaborating on the closing phrase in 10:3 that God will make the house of Judah “like his proud warhorse.” From Judah will come the cornerstone, the tent peg, the battle bow, and every commander needed for war. A cornerstone is an essential foundation piece; a tent peg serves as part of a tent’s foundation; battle bows supply defense; and a commander directs soldiers’ efforts: God will meet Judah’s every need. Zechariah 13:1 adds that God will open a fountain for the dethroned house of David and the scattered (many even exiled) inhabitants of the city to cleanse them from their sins. The logic of this verse is straightforward: because the city had been destroyed by pagan foreigners, its inhabitants must be sinners needing punishment. Zechariah 14:6–11, by contrast, predicts Eden-like conditions for Jerusalem: perfect weather, no nights for evildoing under the cover of darkness, “living” (i.e., running) waters providing plentiful drink year round, and the LORD as king instead of a Davidide. The book ends (14:20) as it begins (1:8) with a reference to horses: even Jerusalem’s horses will be holy (i.e., dedicated) to the LORD.

Jerusalem’s Strength

The remaining theme (appearing in 13:2–9, 14:1–21) builds on the preceding one; the assurance that in the future God will make Jerusalem impregnable to enemies and make it holy once more. In 13:2–6, God promises to “eliminate the names of the idols from the land.” Since in the Hebrew Bible the name of a person or thing can stand for that thing, idolatry itself will be terminated. False prophets will remove their prophetic garments, cease their activity, and concede that they are not genuine. Instead, they will claim to be lifelong farmers. Since prophets sometimes injured themselves in a prophetic frenzy, any such prophets will blame those injuries on farming or on activities in the house of a friend.

Zechariah 13:7–9 addresses a sword, imploring it to strike “the man who is my shepherd” (or “associate”) so that the sheep (all or part of the people of Judah) will be scattered. These verses most likely do not imply a return to exile but to being scattered in the land and losing touch with families. The identity of the “shepherd” is unclear, though apparently it is someone with authority in Judah. Zechariah 14:1–21, by contrast, envisions a reversal of the fortunes of Jerusalem (and perhaps Judah, v. 21). God will gather the nations to battle against Jerusalem, overrun it, rape its women, and plunder its wealth (v. 2). On the day to come, however, God will do battle against the nations and (p. 534) defeat them, standing on the Mount of Olives, a two-mile ridge located across the Kidron Valley (i.e., west of Jerusalem, rising about 4,000 feet high and offering a full view of the city). The mountain will split in two, with the halves withdrawing northward and south-

ward, allowing the people of Jerusalem to flee to safety. God then will make perfect the land and its climate. The city again will be dedicated to the worship of God.

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Malachi

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Abstract and Keywords

This essay gives an overview of important aspects of the interpretation of the book of Malachi. First, the transmission of the Hebrew text is evaluated, with a special focus on the Qumran manuscript 4QXIIa. Second, the translation into Greek is characterized. Third, the form of the book, which basically is a compilation of different disputation speeches, is analyzed. Fourth, the redactional process that generated the final version is discussed. As examples, the themes "return to YHWH" and "the Day of YHWH" are mentioned. Fifth, the historical and economic situation is explored. Sixth, the New Testament use of Malachi is illustrated, for example, the relation of John the Baptist and Jesus. Finally, some theological aspects are mentioned.

Keywords: Malachi, manuscript 4QXIIa, disputation speech, redactional criticism, return to YHWH, Day of YHWH, economic situation, John the Baptist, New Testament

THE term "Malachi" in Mal 1:1 means "my messenger." It is thought to be the proper name of the author of the last writing of the Book of the Twelve Prophets. This is based on the analogy of the beginnings of other prophetic books, which all contain proper names. In addition, in Arad a sherd with "Malachi" was found (Arad inscription 97; Noetzel 2015, 52). The phrase "my messenger" can also be used as a title for someone who serves as a helper of God. In Exod 23:23 and 32:34, the "messenger" probably is a heavenly being who leads Israel through the desert. Be it a name or a title, "my messenger" certainly alludes to Mal 3:1, whether this was meant as a simple word play or as an identification of YHWH's messenger with the prophet himself. Within the superscription, "Malachi" is meant to denote the author of all the speeches that follow. It is therefore common to use "Malachi" also as a title for the whole book of Malachi.

Malachi is part of the Book of the Twelve Prophets. In all extant manuscripts, Malachi is the last writing. There is only one exception, namely the scroll 4QXIIa, which clearly shows remains of some letters following the last column of the text of Malachi.[1] Fuller (1997), who prepared the first edition of the manuscript, concluded that Jonah must have followed Malachi because the other fragments of 4QXIIa contain text from Jonah. Pajunen

and von Weissenberg (2015) have questioned Fuller's thesis, suggesting that while the writing of Jonah did indeed follow Malachi there must have been text comprising five columns in between (see also Guillaume 2007). Nevertheless, it remains difficult to explain why not a single tiny fragment of the columns between Malachi and Jonah survived.

As part of the Book of the Twelve, Malachi is also part of Nebiim, the prophetic division of the canon. The book's ending in 4:4–6 [Heb. 3:22–24] is possibly aware of this position, insofar as it demands readers to follow the law of Moses (4:4 [Heb. 3:22]) and at the same time longs for the coming of Elijah and the day of the LORD (Chapman 2003). Moses represents the Law and Elijah the Prophets, which together represent the first two parts of the tripartite Masoretic canon.

(p. 536) The Hebrew Text of Malachi

The Masoretic Text Compared to the Fragments from the Judean Desert

The starting point for the reconstruction of the original of Malachi is the Masoretic text (MT), which was used for centuries as the canonical text. With the discovery of the Qumran fragments 4QXIIa, 4QXIIc, and 4QCommMal, it is possible to double-check the reliability of this text type against manuscripts that were written in the second and first century BCE (for a synopsis see Ego et al. 2005, 189–195). Indirect evidence is given the Damascus Document (CD 6:13–14), which quotes Mal 1:10.

The nine words from Mal 3:16–18 that are preserved in 4QcommMal (= 4Q253a) are identical with the MT. Among the seven words from Mal 3:6–7 contained in 4QXIIc, two seem to differ from the MT.[2] In 4QXIIc, the name YHWH is followed by the consonants *aleph* and *lamed*, ruling out the possibility that the next word is *tsebaot* ("hosts)" as in the MT.[3] The editors of 4QXIIc reconstruct the two consonants to *elohim* ("God"), although the word could also be *elohekem* ("your God"). In this case the MT clearly has the original reading, because Mal 3:7 quotes from Zech 1:2 verbatim. On the other hand, one can imagine that a scribe replaced *tsebaot* ("hosts") with the more common phrase *elohekem* ("your God") (cf. LXX of Mal 1:9; LXX of Mal 3:6).

The scroll 4QXIIa contains Mal 2:10–3:24 in a very fragmentary state. Ego et al. (2005) count twenty-eight deviations from the Codex Leningradensis, though in most cases only very few consonants are concerned. Only in three cases do the differences involve at least one complete word. In Mal 2:14 a complete colon, comprising the four words ("to whom you have been faithless") has been lost in 4QXIIa, probably by chance; in Mal 2:16, 4QXIIa contains the words *ki im senita* instead of *ki sane* in the MT, and in Mal 2:17 YHWH is replaced by Elohim in 4QXIIa. Only in Mal 2:16 can 4QXIIa claim to contain the original text, but the case is difficult to decide.[4] In sum, with the possible exception of one variant in 4QXIIa of Mal 2:16, the consonants of the Masoretic version represent the oldest preserved Hebrew text type.

The Hebrew Vorlage *of the Greek Translation*

There are seventeen instances where the LXX of Malachi contains at least one word which has no equivalent in the MT. There is no case in which the MT has fewer words. Almost all additional words in the LXX can be classified as grammatical or semantical improvements; they represent the less difficult and therefore the younger text. It is notoriously difficult to decide whether these improvements were made when the Hebrew text was copied or when it was translated into the Greek language.

(p. 537) 4QXIIa seems to suggest that a Hebrew variant may account for the LXX translation of Mal 2:16. In the MT, the verse could be translated as “for someone hates sending away (his wife)”(AT), while the LXX reads, “But if, since you hate her, you should send her away.” 4QXIIa preserves the verb form “you hate her,” indicating that the difference between the MT and LXX reflects differences in text transmission. One may extrapolate that in other cases the same was true.

There are seven verses in which the LXX has words without an equivalent in the MT (1:1; 1:7; 2:2; 3:3; 3:5; 3:6a; 3:19). In most cases, the translator took the additional words from the immediate context. At least some of this additional wording may have been already part of the *Vorlage*.

In sum, the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint differs from MT in very few cases. With the possible exception of 2:16a, the MT represents the oldest text of Malachi. However, this text is obviously corrupt at some places: deleting one or two words would yield a clearer text (e.g., *nibo*, “its fruit,” in 1:12; *er weoneh*, “witness or answerer,” 2:12). In other cases such as 2:3b and 2:15, plausible conjectures would involve so many consonants that it is impossible to make a controlled guess.

The Greek Translation

The whole of the Book of the Twelve has the same translator. Because the translator worked word by word and very literally, most of the Hebrew *Vorlage* was accurately translated without significant changes in meaning. Nevertheless, the translator did make some changes, deliberately or not, to the *Vorlage*. Most are stylistic harmonizations, while others are due to misreadings of consonants. I offer a few examples where variants change the meaning of a verse.

As in the other writings of the *Dodekapropheton*, the translator used *pantokrator* (“almighty”) as an equivalent for *tsebaot* (“hosts”), creating an attribute of God very important for the later Christian understanding of God. In Mal 1:1 the translator interprets the Hebrew expression *malaki* (“my messenger”) not as a name but as a title: “his (=YHWH’s) messenger.” In addition, the Greek translator added the command, “Do place it upon your hearts!” at the end of the verse. These words stem from Hag 2:15 and 2:18 (cf. Mal 2:2) and seem to identify the messenger of Mal 1:1 with Haggai, who is called

"messenger of the LORD" in the LXX of Hag 1:13. As a consequence, in the Septuagint the writing of Malachi becomes an additional part of the writing of Haggai.

In Mal 1:9 the translator chooses *exilaskomai* ("to appease") as an equivalent to the Hebrew *halah* ("implore"). Elsewhere this Greek verb is used to translate the Hebrew word *kipper* ("make atonement"), regularly used to describe the goal of sacrifices in the cultic stipulations of the Torah (e.g., Lev 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6; 16:6). As a result, the Greek reading aligns Malachi's description of the cult with that of the Torah more than does the MT.

(p. 538) The MT of 2:9 states, "and so I make you despised and abased before all the people," while the Septuagint has, "And I rendered you despised and disregarded among all the nations." According to the Septuagint, the fate of the priests is not only relevant for Israel but also for the nations. Foreigners are imagined as offering incense and sacrifices to YHWH (1:11). They seem to know how to sacrifice, but YHWH's punishing of the priests in Jerusalem affects them as well. Similarly, in 3:15 and 3:19 the Septuagint translates Hebrew *zedim* ("arrogant") with "foreigners." This translation very probably stems from a simple interchange of *zedim* with *zerim* ("foreigners"), yet something new is created: non-Israelites are included. Foreigners are portrayed both as offering incense but also as doing lawless things and opposing God (3:15); on the coming day they will perish.

In 2:11 the Septuagint reads, "and busied himself with foreign gods." The MT instead reads, "and has married the daughter (*bat*) of a foreign god." Since the meaning of the Hebrew is unclear, the LXX version is certainly smoother. It is questionable whether the MT is identical with the *Vorlage* of the LXX. 4QXIIa reads "house *(bet)* of a foreign God," which also differs from the MT.

The LXX connects 3:16 to the preceding sentence with *tauta* ("this, so"). As a consequence, the speech of the prophet's opponents (3:14–15) is identified with what the YHWH fearers said to one another. It seems that to fear YHWH does not exclude serious questioning of God's justice. This may be one option for how to understand the Hebrew text, but the MT probably keeps the groups separate.

In the appendix (MT 3:22–24, LXX 4:4–6), the MT first has an admonition concerning the law of Moses and then a reference to Elijah's coming, whereas the LXX first mentions the future coming of Elijah and then the admonition to keep the *torah* of Moses. This difference in order is commonly explained by the assumption that the translator did not want the Book of the Twelve to end with a threatening act of God.

The Greek translator avoided some anthropomorphic statements about God. In the MT version of 1:7b, the opponents ask, "How have we polluted you (=YHWH)?" The LXX instead reads, "How did we defile them (the loaves)?," avoiding the idea that human beings can defile God directly. Likewise, in 2:3a the MT has the reading, "I spread dung on your faces," implying that God comes in immediate contact with an impure material object. The LXX translates the Hebrew "dung" with *enustron* ("paunch"), thereby avoiding an awkward image. In 2:17, the MT implies that human beings can make YHWH "tired." The

LXX chooses “provoke” instead, thereby avoiding the possibility that God can get exhausted. Similarly, the Septuagint avoids the idea that it is possible to put YHWH to the test (3:10; 3:15).

Poetic Analysis of the Book of Malachi

Whether Malachi is poetic literature or prose is disputed. Bernhard Duhm (1910) argued that Malachi is completely prosaic in nature, while Gelston (BHQ, 2010) considers almost all texts to be poetic. Some commentators prefer the term *gehobene Prosa* (p. 539) (elevated prose) (Bulmerincq 1926, 422; Kessler 2011, 57; Hill 1998, 26). In order to classify a text as poetic, it is best to look for bicolons (paired lines) because most can be detected with a high degree of certainty: if there are two colas that comprise roughly the same number of words; are semantically parallel to each other in a synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic manner (*parallelism membrorum*); follow a similar grammatical structure; and share some phonetic features (different forms of rhyme), one can safely assume that they together form a poetic line. Judging by these criteria, there are some regular formed poetic lines in the writing of Malachi, for example, in 1:2bβ//3a; 1:3ba//3bβ; 1:4aγ; 4b; 1:6; 1:14b; 2:10a; 2:17b; 3:1a; 3:2a; 3:2b; 3:5a; 3:6; 3:7aβ; 3:8aα; 3:9; 3:11aβ//bα; 3:12a//bα; 3:14a//bα; 3:18aβ; 4:6 [Heb. 3:24]. There are also verses that reveal only few poetic features, though at least some of these may have been perceived as poetry by ancient readers.

The Disputation Speech

The structure of Malachi is almost undisputed. It contains six disputation speeches (1:2–5; 1:6–2:9; 2:10–16; 2:17–3:5; 3:6–12; 3:13–21), a heading (1:1), and a concluding reminder to follow the *tora* linked to an announcement about the future coming of Elijah (4:4-5 [Heb. 3:22–24]).[5] These disputation speeches are a unique feature of Malachi. Their goal is to reject opposing opinions with arguments. The prophet, as the nameless speaker may be called, summarizes in his own words and from his own point of view a disputation held with an opposing group. He speaks in the name of YHWH, as indicated by the phrase “Word of YHWH” in the superscription (1:1) and the use of the prophetic formulas “thus says YHWH of hosts” (1:4), “says YHWH” (1:2, 13b; 3:13), and “says YHWH of hosts” (twenty times). The prophet usually stands apart from his interlocutors as a speaker of YHWH, but in three places he joins together with the addressed persons as a “we” (1:9a; 2:10; 2:17).

The six speeches begin with a thesis, either a divine self-statement (1:2; 1:6; 3:6; 3:13) or a word of the prophet himself (2:10; 2:17). In the second step, the prophet introduces the opinion of a group of interlocutors with the formula, “But you have said.” The opponents do not contradict the thesis directly but ask for evidence. Remarkably, the prophet gives substantial weight to the opponents by apparently quoting them extensively and verba-

tim; it seems probable that he allows his own evaluation to flow into the (re-)formulation of the opponents' words, polemically sharpening the position of the opponents.

As a third step, the prophet invalidates the objection of the opponents by accumulating "arguments." These arguments are not strictly logical in a modern sense, as the prophet offers anything that can move the opponents: accusations, frightening examples, and appeals to the Torah and other shared traditional norms. If the opponents are still not satisfied, the prophet points toward YHWH's future intervention (e.g., 3:5; 4:1 [Heb. 3:19]). This last "argument" brings in a new twist: the opponents and the prophet have to wait for the future, which will prove or disapprove the arguments. In this respect, the final answer to the objections of the opponents awaits God's future acts.

(p. 540) Redactional Criticism

Most commentators consider the book of Malachi to be the product of multiple redactional activities (see O'Brien 1990, 51–57; Kessler 2011, 59–61). It is difficult, however, to fit passages from the different speeches into a consistent redactional model. Very generally, one may differentiate between passages that belong to an editing activity within the book itself and those related to redactional activity in the larger Book of the Twelve.

The Book of Malachi

The book of Malachi began when some oral disputations were cast into the form of disputation speeches by an author and published as a collection. The last speech (3:13–4:3 [Heb. 3:13–21]) may have been added later, because the righteous and the wicked are not mentioned in any of the other speeches. The second speech is the most difficult. Wöhrle (2008) and Schart (2016) have tried to separate at least two layers. The basic layer represents a critique of laypeople for bringing incorrect offerings to the table of YHWH (1:6, 7b, 9b, 10b, 13aα–14a; 2:9a). A redactor edited the speech in such a way that it is now directed against the priests (added in 1:6b and 2:1) who bring flawed sacrifices to the altar. Unfortunately, the basic layer reconstructed by Schart (1:6, 7b, 9b, 10b, 13aα–14a; 2:9a) seems not to be complete. The passage in 3:1b–4, which is secondary within the fourth speech, is also related to this redactional activity because it envisions a cleansing of the Levites and their full restitution. The other speeches probably also contain secondary elements. In the first speech the basic layer comprises 1:2–3; in the third 2:10–12a; in the fifth 3:6, 8–12; in the sixth 3:13–15, 18, 19*, 20a*, 20b (cf. Schart 2019).

The twenty instances of the formula *amar adonai tsebaot* ("says the LORD of hosts") are in most cases secondary. This is best demonstrated by 1:13, where a speech explicitly marked as quoting the opponents is incorrectly labeled as a word of YHWH: "And you say: Behold, (this is) trouble! and blast at him—said YHWH *tsebaot*."

Inclusion into the Book of the Twelve Prophets

The collection of the disputation speeches described earlier was included into the Book of the Twelve Prophets. Some of the editorial additions are similar to other additions in the Book of the Twelve.

- The superscription in 1:1 borrows the genre term *massa* (“oracle)” from Zech 9:1 and 12:1. Likewise, the term *dabar adonai* (“word of the LORD”) links the superscription to the headings of pre-exilic writings (Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1).
- Malachi 1:11 serves as transition from Zech 14:9. It restates the concept of YHWH’s kingdom over the nations.

(p. 541) • The references to the day of YHWH (3:2; 4:5 [Heb. 3:23]) pick up the terminology of Joel (Joel 3:4b).

- The addition of *malak adonai* (“messenger of the LORD”) in 2:7 and 3:1a belongs together with similar additions in Zech 1:11aα, 12aα1; 3:1aβ, 5bβ,6; and Hag 1:13.
- The call to return to YHWH in 3:7 belongs together with the identical call in Zech 1:3.
- The fearers of YHWH in 3:16, 20a are related to the Jonah narrative (Jonah 1:16).

Return to YHWH

Within the Book of the Twelve Prophets, the return to YHWH plays an important role. Hosea ends with a call to repentance (14:2–5), which is taken up by Joel (2:12–14). Because neither Israel nor Judah and Jerusalem follow the call, YHWH carries out the punishment. Under Persian rule YHWH grants restitution because Israel actually repents (Zech 1:6) in response to the call made in Zech 1:3. YHWH claims that he has returned to Zion himself (Zech 8:3; see 8:11, 15), but this conversion obviously remains temporary because in Mal 3:7 the call from Zech 1:3 must be repeated. In the remaining verses of Malachi neither Israel’s nor YHWH’s conversion is reported, resulting in an open ending. In turn, the readers are called to accept the invitation contained in the book. The author suggests that YHWH waits for repentance almost longingly, so that the covenant relation is restored and YHWH can resume pouring out his blessings.

Day of YHWH

The expectation of the day of YHWH is certainly the dominant thematic thread in the Book of the Twelve Prophets, even beyond the passages which explicitly contain the phrase “day of YHWH.” The day of YHWH will bring judgment and salvation to Israel, the nations, and all creation. Zechariah 14 offers an impressive and elaborate scenario of this day, but after this utopian view Malachi returns to the sad present: grievances at the temple, in the priesthood, and among the laity; disintegration of marriages and families; exploitation of the *personae miserae*; and the success of the wicked. Malachi’s eschatological visions are not meant to distract from everyday economic and cultic decisions in the present but to solve real problems. In addition, the sixth disputation speech complements the vision of Zech 14 with the important aspect of “individual” retaliation. While in Zech

14 YHWH deals with the whole people, Mal 3:13-4:3 [Heb. 3:13–21] defines different groups with which individuals can choose to align or distance themselves.

The editors of the Book of the Twelve have strengthened the eschatological perspective by alluding to Joel's description of the coming day of YHWH (Mal 3:21. 4:1a [Heb. 3:19a], 4:5 [Heb. 3:23]; Joel 2:11; 2:31 [Heb. 3:4]). The prophet refers to the day of YHWH when he cannot sufficiently assuage doubts about the present effectiveness of YHWH. It is remarkable that the coming of the day of YHWH is connected to a "messenger" as precursor (3:1a), who in 4:5 (Heb. 3:23) is probably identified with Elijah.

(p. 542) Historical Situation of Malachi

Dating

The book of Malachi contains very few clues or circumstantial evidence to allow exact dating. One has to keep in mind that the different layers have to be dated differently. There are clear hints that the temple in Jerusalem has been rebuilt: references to doors (1:10), to the *hekal* ("temple building," 3:1), to a storehouse that was probably located on the temple ground (3:10), to the "table of the LORD" (1:7), and the *mizbeah* ("altar of sacrifice," 1:7, 10) presuppose a full-functioning temple. In Mal 1:8 a *peha* is mentioned, probably the provincial governor of the Persians. Unfortunately, a name is not given and this Persian official title, as coinage shows, was still used in Hellenistic times. In Mal 1:4 it is assumed that Edom has perished. This national disaster must have been before everyone's eyes at the time of writing, but it is difficult to find a specific date.

While Malachi has thematic as well as literary ties with the books Ezra and Nehemiah, the references are not specific and neither Ezra nor Nehemiah is mentioned. It is also uncertain as to whether the Mal 2:10–16 refers to the same mixed marriages described in Ezra 10 and Neh 13:23–27. The similarities can probably be sufficiently explained by the assumption that the global sociocultural problems addressed by Malachi's author were constant throughout the postexilic period.

In sum, the oldest stratum of the book is likely to date to around 500. Most of the text originates from the Achaemenid period. In general, the Persians pursued a policy of peaceful and harmonious unification of nations under Persian domination. The writing of Malachi seems to accept the Persian rule.

Kessler (2011) dates the final form of the writing of Malachi later, in the fourth century. Reflections of Hellenization in the wake of Alexander the Great are rare, however. Noetzel considers Ptolemaic influence for the idea that the "sun of righteousness" brings healing (2015). The appendix in 4:5–6 [Heb. 3:23–24], which refers to a profound generation conflict, resonates with the tensions between those who opened themselves to Hellenization and those who strictly rejected it. Ecclesiasticus 49:10 mentions the "twelve

prophets” around 180 BCE, probably presupposing the Book of the Twelve Prophets as a scroll. At this time, the book of Malachi must have been almost finished.

Economic Situation

Assessing the economic situation is important for understanding the motives of the prophet’s opponents. Why did they fail to pay the tithe in full (3:10a) and sacrifice an animal not matching the requirements for offerings to YHWH (1:8)? Were they in a state of emergency caused by drought or grain pests? Did they want to retain their profits rather than donate them to the temple staff? Or did they interpret the law differently from the prophet?

(p. 543) Most commentators assume that the people were in a desolate economic position because great agricultural problems are mentioned (Hag 1:10–11; 2:15–19; Zech 8:9–13; Mal 3:10–12). Alternatively, one may also speculate that a growing economy involving international trade fostered a way of “economic thinking” in which money to the temple was not seen as a good investment. The opponents of the prophet seek “profit” (3:14) and accept the authority of the Persian governor to assess product quality (1:14). The list of *personae miserae* in 3:5 is also telling. In addition to the traditional group of widows, orphans, strangers, and Levites, wage laborers are also mentioned as victims of oppression. This indicates that wage labor had increased sharply and, in turn, that traditional family farms may have been pressured by larger economic units employing wage laborers. Interestingly, it is not the wage *worker* who is oppressed but his *wage*, suggesting that producers in Yehud were under strong economic pressure to keep their wage costs low. At the same time, the references to the “soap of the fullers” (3:2), the fattening of calves (3:20), and the “fire of the smelter” (3:3) hint at technically innovative production methods (Schart 2018b). The prophet takes the side of those whom he understands to be oppressed and wants the social legislations of the Torah enforced.

Different Groups Reflected in Malachi

Malachi refers to different groups (Berquist 1989; Schart 2012). The most important is the prophet and his supporters. In the opposition are the priests and Levites (1:6 and 2:1), belonging to the same group. Although they practice all kinds of misdeeds, the prophet presupposes that the priests and Levites are essential for Israel now and in the future. Malachi 3:3–4 expresses the expectation that the Levites will be cleansed on the coming day, so that the covenant with Levi (2:4b, 8b) can resume. Such a covenant is mentioned nowhere else in biblical literature.

The prophet accuses some laypeople who actively participate in the cult but nevertheless hold back possessions that should be used for the temple and offer blind animals (1:8a); he characterizes the sacrificial practice of this group as “evil” (1:8a). The prophet does not suggest how the criticized persons justified their behavior. They may have argued that YHWH’s acceptance of the sacrifice depended not on the sacrificial material but the inner attitude of the offerer. The use of the term “toil” (1:13) raises the possibility that the

cult participants were in an economically difficult situation and could sell the animals elsewhere at a good profit (cf. 3:14). Giving the impression that the priests accepted the cult practice of the laity, the text portrays the prophet as more focused on cultic requirements than the priests.

Some of the interlocutors may have distanced themselves from the temple cult altogether. In 3:15, the *zedim* are characterized as people who put YHWH to the test yet nevertheless have economic success. YHWH may have been seen not as rewarding the traditional practice of piety but instead lending success to those engaged in agricultural innovation, high product quality, and participation in international trade.

(p. 544) Reception within the Christian Bible

It is unclear whether the historical Jesus actively used the book of Malachi. Of the quotations and allusions to Malachi attributed to Jesus, only one can claim an historical core. In the discussion about the scribes' opinion that Elijah must precede the coming of the day of YHWH (Mk 9:11; cf. Mt 17:11; Lk 1:17), Jesus seems to have understood John the Baptist as the returned Elijah (Mk 9:13). If this understanding does not reflect Jesus's own views, certainly the authors of the gospels understood John the Baptist to be the eschatological forerunner of Jesus. Paul uses the example of Jacob and Esau (Rom 9:13; quoting Mal 1:2–3a) to show that God determined the salvation of Jacob while he was in the womb, long before he could act in ways to earn God's reward.

Theological Significance

Malachi shares the widespread belief that Israel is bound by a covenant with YHWH. The covenant is initially set by God as a one-sided act of grace, and blessings flow from God through different channels to the land and the people of Israel. Israel has the privilege of experiencing God's glory and God's name but also the duty to offer gifts to God in return (*minhah*, 1:10, 11, 13; 2:12, 13; 3:3, 4). If gifts are handled disrespectfully by priests or the laypeople, blessing diminishes and curse spreads instead. The priests, who are supposed to bless Israel, will only spread curse if they do not adhere to the ideal model of Levi and cling to the stipulations of the Torah. Likewise, nature will refuse its cooperation with humankind and bring no more yield.

This idea of the covenant is common in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Malachi insists more than other prophets that the quality of the sacrifices must match the requirements of the Torah, placing less importance on the moral behavior of the people who bring the sacrifices. When Malachi's opponents claim that persons who have fulfilled their obligations to God have not received adequate reward (3:14), the prophet responds that they withhold the offerings they are obliged to give to the temple (3:8–10). A full reward, however, will only be given when the day of the LORD comes.

The positive statement about the nations (1:11, 14) is unique: nations offer “pure gifts” and recognize the “greatness” of YHWH in the present. Perhaps at least some of the non-Israelites belong to the camp of “those who fear YHWH,” who will triumph over the wicked when the day of the LORD comes (3:13–21).

Julia O’Brien in particular has stirred discussion about the theological relevance of Malachi for readers in a modern Western society. She asks whether the concept of God as a patriarch, who demands complete submissiveness by the family members is not “abusive” (2001a, 209; 2001b). As O’Brien herself points out, however, the intention of the ancient author only becomes clear if one takes the circumstances of the ancient situ (p. 545) ation into account (cf. Kessler 2011, 91). For example, describing God’s anger and imagining God cruelly destroying God’s enemies may serve to inspire hope for the victims who suffer from these enemies (cf. Kessler 2011, 87–92).

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Notes:

([1.]) Thanks to the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, a picture of the fragment is available on the Internet: https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-368347.

([2.]) According to Weissenberg (2012, n. 28) the fragment 35 of 4QXIIc, which contains the text portion from Malachi, belongs to a different scroll.

([3.]) The translation of the MT comes from the New Revised Standard Version. English quotations of the Septuagint come from Howard (2007). If a translation stems from the author, it is marked as “author translation”(AT).

([4.]) The fragment is named Plate 296, Frag 1, B-295182 in the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library and can be accessed at https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-295182.

([5.]) See Schart 2018a. O’Brien (1990, 63) prefers to identify the form of Malachi to follow a “covenant lawsuit” comprising different accusations.

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